

Defense Minister to Visit Syria

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Defense Minister, Mohammad Forouzandeh, is to visit Syria soon, it was announced in Damascus, Syria Sunday.

Iran's ambassador to Damascus, Mohammad Hassan Akhtari, meeting with Syrian Defense Minister, General Mustafa Tlass, announced the upcoming visit of Forouzandeh but did not elaborate on the precise date.

Key international and regional developments following the recent Zionist regime's aggressions against southern Lebanon and Tehran-Damascus ties were among other issues discussed in the meeting.

During the meeting the two sides discussed the outlines of the imminent visit.



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Bosnian Serb Politician Nikola Koljevic Dies

BELGRADE — Nikola Koljevic, former vice president of Republika Srpska, the Serb entity in Bosnia, died Saturday in Belgrade, the official Tanjug news agency reported. He was 60.

Citing a communique from the Serbian capital's central military hospital, it said Koljevic had succumbed to the wounds he sustained in a suicide attempt on January 16.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Afghanistan Peace Conference Winds Up, Urges Immediate Cease-Fire



Photo: Abbas Takin

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani here Sunday said that the Afghan factions should pave the way for peaceful negotiations and restoration of peace in that country through self-sacrifices.

He made the remark in a meeting with the Afghan leaders who called on him at the end of the Afghanistan Peace Conference which wound up here yesterday.

President Rafsanjani warned that with the prolongation of war in Afghanistan the resources of that country will be wasted, the process of development halted and the future generations will be squeezed due to scarcity of resources.

Rafsanjani called on the Afghan factions to put an end to present clashes with the same determination that they terminated foreign aggression.

The Afghan crisis does not have a military solution, he said, adding that all Afghan groups should jointly end the bloodshed.

The Afghan government, headed by President Rabbani, has international recognition, and is a member of the UN, ECO and OIC, he said, adding all countries adjust their relations with Rabbani's government.

To Islamic Republic of Iran, the government of President Rabbani is legitimate and Iran will not adjust its relations with others.

President Rafsanjani stressed the need for coordination between regional countries, specially Iran and Pakistan, to help restore peace in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan Peace Conference Which began here Saturday, ended yesterday urgin all Afghan faction to immediately cease hostility.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the conference, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati termed Tehran conference a positive step towards restoration of peace, stability and tranquility in Afghanistan.

Velayati said that the participants at the conference strongly believe that the problem of Afghanistan can not be settled through military means and that

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Turkmenistan Appreciates Iran's Peace Efforts

Photo: Mojtaba Takin

TEHRAN — Turkmen Foreign Minister Boris Sheikhmuradov said here on Sunday the Islamic Republic of Iran has turned intc a center for resolving regional crisis.

In a meeting with President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani here where he submitted a message from President Saparmurat Niyazov, Sheikhmuradov said Turkmenistan appreciates the decisive role of Iranian diplomacy in protecting peace and security in the region.

He said Turkmenistan is willing to cooperate with the Islamic Republic of Iran for restoration of peace and tranquility to the neighboring states.

President Rafsanjani said Turkmenistan is one of the friendly countries of Iran in the region.

He expressed hope that the neighboring states would cooperate with Iran to help restore peace and stability in the region.

In his message, President Niyazov has called for development of friendly relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Meanwhile, Iranian Majlis speaker Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri said here on Sunday the only solution to the Afghan crisis is non-interference of foreign countries and inter-Afghan dialogue.

In a meeting with Turkmen Foreign Minister Boris Sheikhmuradov who has come to Iran to take part in Afghan peace talks, Nateq Nouri emphasized the need for peace and stability in the region and said it is felt that some elements outside the region are working to prevent peace from being established in Afghanistan because they see their security in escalation of tension in that country.

Sheikhmuradov said Turkmenistan is ready to help restore peace in Afghanistan.

He said the Turkmen government and nation are aware of the important role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in settling regional and international problems and believe that the regional crisis would not come to an end without Iranian contribution.

(IRNA)

Hojjatoleslam Khatami to Run for Presidency

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Former Culture and Islamic Guidance minister Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami has declared he will run for the president election scheduled in July this year, the morning Persian daily *Salaam* reported here Sunday.

Khatami's candidacy is said to be certain and will be announced officially within the next few days, the daily stated.

Although no group has so far announced official support for Khatami's candidacy, it is said that the Majma'e Rohaniyoun-e Mobarez (MRM), a coalition of groups following the Imam's path and the Kargozaran-e Sazandegi have plans to back him up as voiced in private meetings, the daily added.



His political backing makes Hojjatoleslam Khatami, 59, the choice of the radical left and moderate factions. Hojjatoleslam Khatami held

(Contd on Pg. 14)

RABBANI:

Tehran Peace Conference a Positive Step Toward Peace

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Visiting Afghan President Burhanudin Rabbani here Sunday termed the achievements of the Tehran Peace Conference positive, saying that such meeting would pave the way for restoration of peace and tranquility in his country.

Talking to the *Tehran Times*, he expressed satisfaction over participation of a large number of Afghan leaders at the Tehran meeting. He added that the meeting provided the Afghan groups with an opportunity to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan crisis.

Asked to comment on Taleban's baseless allegations against the Islamic Republic of Iran charging Tehran of partiality in its mediation efforts, Rabbani underlined that the Taleban militia only express what is dictated to them.



"The main problem of the Taleban is that their stand does not stem from their own ideas and I hope that they change their mind and decide independently," the Afghan president noted.

President Rabbani stressed that

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Chechens First Post-War Elections Today

GROZNY, Russia -- Chechens will hold their first post-war elections today in a showdown between the top guerrilla general and a young commander branded a terrorist in Russia.

The presidential and parliamentary elections are vital to returning peace to the tiny north Caucasus republic, in ruins after a 21-month war to drive out Russian troops who attacked in December 1994 to enforce Moscow's rule.

All five serious presidential candidates are committed to pursuing the independence from Russia first claimed just before the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Concerned by the building momentum towards independence for the Muslim Chechens, a deputy foreign minister warned Sunday that "the harshest measures" would be taken against any country that gave diplomatic recognition.

Most believe the presidential winner will be Aslan Maskhadov, the silver-haired Chechen general

(Contd on Pg. 14)

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In the Name of God

O you who believe! be not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle, nor be unfaithful to your trusts while you know.

(HOLY QORAN) (8:27)

OPINION

Upcoming Poll in Chechnya Is Welcome

About 450,000 voters are going to the polls in Chechnya to elect their president and legislators. The poll, to be conducted from 7.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. today, is aimed at ending the bloody conflict in the Caucasus republic that has dragged on for nearly 21 months. The clashes have already claimed some 50,000 lives in the republic, which is almost reduced to rubble now.

In order to ensure a lasting peace and stability in the Caucasus republic and the region, all of the parties concerned should try their utmost to guarantee a fair poll.

There are 72 observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) who are going to monitor the elections. They can play a major role in preventing the election results from being tampered with. Indeed, if the elections are held in a healthy atmosphere, those taking offices will be true representatives of the Chechens.

As far as Russia is concerned, it should in the first instance unconditionally respect the result of the poll. Beyond any doubt, Russia's recognition of the Chechen president will boost mutual confidence and set the stage for close cooperation between Moscow and Grozny.

Although today's elections will be recorded as a milestone in the history of the Caucasus republic, Chechnya has more significant tasks to accomplish in the future. The reconstruction of the war-ravaged republic is a top priority for every Chechen. And Russia can greatly contribute to the cause of reconstruction and development in the republic.

Underdevelopment is among the root causes of conflicts and discords anywhere in the world, since it fosters public protest and dissidence, which finally lead to uprising and rebellion. Russia should offer any assistance possible to Chechnya to help it develop its economy and exploit its natural resources.

As a matter of fact, Moscow is partly to blame for damages inflicted on Chechnya due to the misguided policies of the Kremlin officials on the Chechen issue, which prescribed force to settle the Chechen problem. However, those policies only resulted in utter destruction and heavy casualties without actually resolving the issue.

Helping Chechnya to build its economy will help Russia to compensate for its past mistakes and prepare the groundwork for cordial ties with the Chechen Republic, laying the foundations of a permanent peace and stability in the region. A lasting peace in Chechnya will not only benefit Moscow but other regional countries as well.

Foreign Dignitaries Confer With Velayati



Photo: Abbas Kowsari

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Foreign dignitaries participating in Tehran peace talks on Afghanistan held separate meetings with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati here Sunday.

In a meeting with Velayati, the Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani condemned foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

He said although the Afghans succeeded to overcome the communist occupiers through their unity, discord and hostilities among Afghan groups later hindered the trend of reconstruction in the country.

Lauding the Islamic Republic for its peace efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan, Rabbani said that civil war in his country resulted in hunger and homelessness of millions.

He called on Iranian authorities to increase humanitarian assistance to help remove economic problems of Afghan people.

Referring to the participation of majority of Afghan factions in Tehran peace talks (Jan. 25-26), the Iranian foreign minister expressed hope that the talks bring about further cooperation among the leaders of the Afghan groups and help establish a government in Afghanistan comprising all political, religious and ethnic groups.

In a separate meeting on Sunday, Velayati and former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar held talks on the successful trend of negotiations in Tehran.

Referring to significant mediation efforts of Iran in Afghanistan, Hekmatyar lauded Iran's assistance to his country and stressed the necessity of unity among all warring sides in the war-torn country.

He expressed hope that Tehran peace talks on Afghanistan would bring fruitful results and help resolve Afghan plight.

Velayati said that the Islamic Republic believes that there is no military solution to the crisis in Afghanistan, adding that Tehran has always held a principled stance on the issue.

Expressing Iran's readiness to help settle the conflict, Velayati said that negotiations are the best solution to the crisis.

According to another development Foreign Minister Velayati and his Turkmen counterpart Boris Sheikhmoradov, here Saturday night, discussed promotion of bilateral cooperation as well as regional and international cooperation between their respective countries.

Referring to Iranian efforts to restore peace and tranquility in war-stricken Afghanistan, Sheikhmoradov, said the Iranian initiative in holding the Afghan peace confab in Tehran was a clear message to the world public opinion about Iranian concern for regional stability.

Gradually the true face of the supporters of friendship and peace as well as the true face of the war mongers would be known to all, he added.

Briefing his Turkmen counterpart on Iranian efforts to restore peace and tranquility in Afghanistan, Velayati reiterated that the only way to end the crisis was peaceful negotiations.

Velayati and Sheikhmoradov also exchanged views on Irano-Turkmen cooperation including the scheduled visit to Iran of Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov.

On Saturday, the Armenian Foreign Minister Alexander Arzumanayn called on Velayati. In the meeting the two sides discussed multilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Arzumanayn, said Yerevan attaches great importance to its relations with Tehran, and said that expansion of multilateral relations with Islamic Iran was among the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy.

The other issue discussed by the two officials was Tehran-Yerevan cooperation in the region and at international forums.

Velayati, dismissing the idea of any military solution to the dispute on Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, announced Iran's readiness to help Armenia reach a just and honorable peace in its disputes with the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to facilitate the return home of Karabakh refugees.

The two foreign ministers refuted all foreign meddlings in regional issues.

President Receives Outgoing Australian Ambassador

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani here Sunday received the outgiong Australian Ambassador to Tehran Nicolas Warner.

The Australian diplomat assessed as successful the efforts made to promote political and economic cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported.

Warner said the two countries enjoy high potentials for expansion of cooperation especially in fields of economy and exchange of technical expertise.

The president welcomed expansion of relations between the two countries.

Habibi Felicitates Indian National Day

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — In separate messages to Indian Vice President K.R. Narayanan and Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, the Iranian first vice president felicitated India's Republic Day, January 26.

Habibi expressed hope that Tehran-New Delhi ties will grow stronger, IRNA reported.

He stressed that closer cooperation especially in regional and international affairs will further boost bilateral relations and promote peace and stability in the region.

Iran Still Recognizes Government of President Rabbani

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati here Sunday announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran still recognizes the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

The foreign minister underlined that as the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has said, some measures taken by the Taleban militia are an affront to Islam.

Speaking at a press conference at the end of the Afghanistan Peace Conference, Velayati said all the participants at the meeting including representatives from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the United Nations strongly believe in a peaceful solution to Afghan crisis.

Velayati further termed the declaration of the Tehran conference the message of peace for Afghanistan and called on all Afghan groups to work for materialization of the declaration.

He said that although Taleban sent no delegation to the talks but there were representatives of other groups including Afghanistan Islamic Revolution Movement led by Mulavi Muhammad Nabi and Islamic Movement led by Yunis Khalis who supported Taleban in this meeting.

As for the presence of Turkey as an observer at the Tehran meeting, Velayati said that Iran warmly welcomes Turkey's active participation adding that the problem of Afghanistan can be resolved better through cooperation of all regional countries.

He emphasized that Iran's policy is to assist the people of Afghanistan to resolve their problems through peaceful means, adding that Iran does not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries particularly in those of Afghanistan.

Asked if Taleban expresses its will to negotiate with Iran, will Iran accept them? Velayati said, Iran is a great country with a determining role in the region, adding that it is below our dignity to consider ourselves equal to Taleban

Whenever they like, the Taleban can convey their viewpoints to us, he said.

On whether Iran wants to have an access to Central Asia through Afghanistan, Velayati said, we do not need to have an access through Afghanistan. We have direct access to those republics via our joint borders.

TEHRAN – The submarine Iran has recenlty purchased from Russia will beef up Iran's underwater defense capacity, an informed source in Khatamul Anbia Naval Headquarter said.

Iranian Ambassador, UAE Interior Minister Meet

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Iran, UAE bilateral relations and security cooperation between the two countries were discussed in a meeting between Hossein Sadeqi, Iran's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, and the UAE Minister of Interior, Muhammad Said al-Badi, in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Stressing his country's willingness for expansion of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UAE minister expressed hope that his country would benefit from Iran's experiences in the field of anti-drug campaign, an IRNA report said.

Habibi Congratulates New Austrian Chancellor

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — In a message to the new Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima, the Iranian First Vice President Hassan Habibi congratulated his appointment to the post.

In his message, Habibi expressed hope that during Klima's term in office Tehran-Vienna relations will further grow.

The vice president hoped that through constructive and closer cooperation, measures will be taken towards serving interests of both countries.

Iran, Turkmenistan, Armenia Trilateral Talks Held

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Iranian, Turkmen and Armenian foreign ministers held a trilateral meeting here Saturday night exploring ways for further cooperation and boosting trade among the three countries.

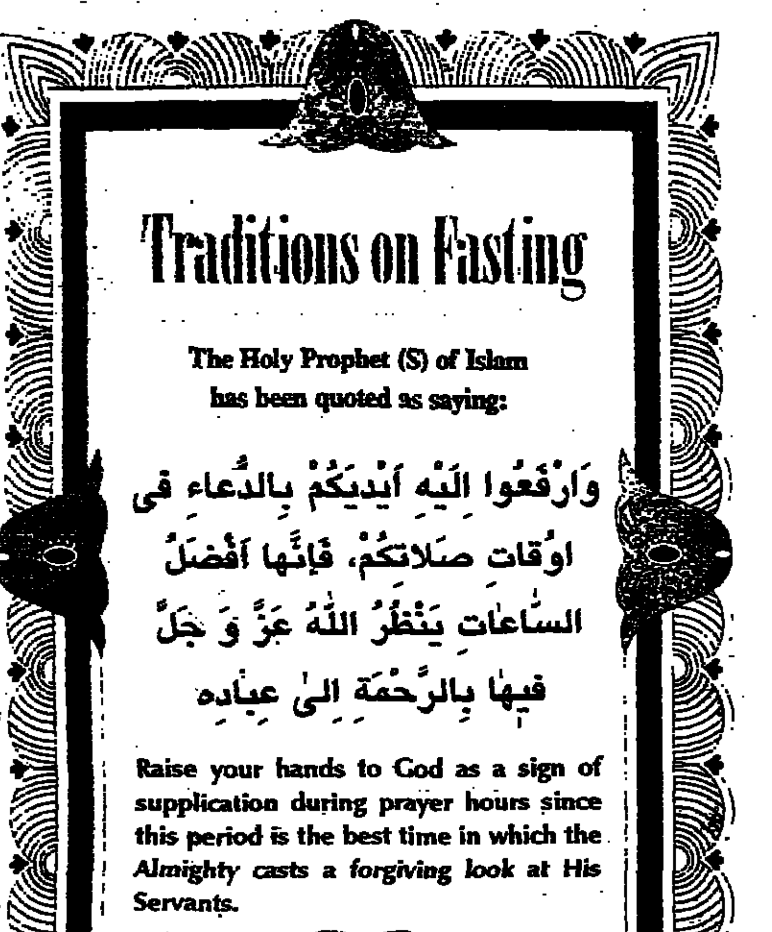
The three foreign ministers, Iran's Ali Akbar Velayati, Turkmenistan's Boris Sheikhmoradov and Armenia's Alexander Arzumanayn, also announced that the three-nation joint transportation company will be soon finalized.

They said the next trilateral meeting of foreign ministers of Iran, Turkmenistan and Armenia, will be held in the Armenian capital of Yerevan.

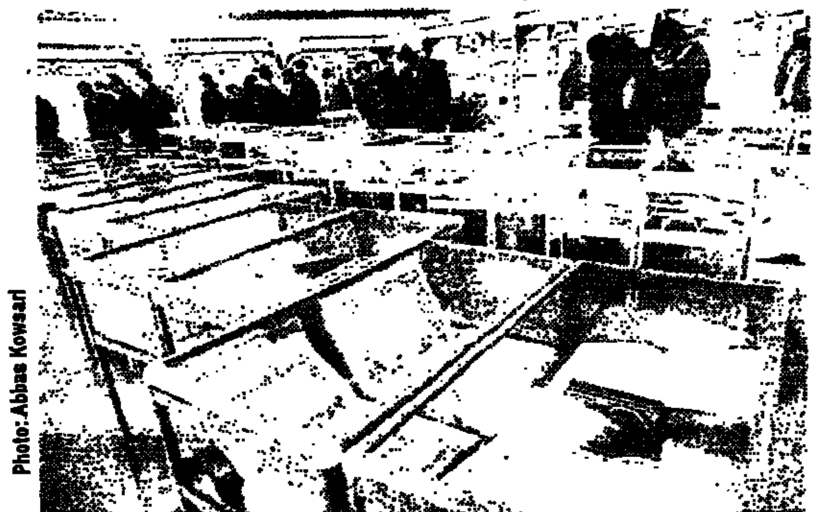


Photo: Abbas Takin





4th International Exhibition of Holy Qoran Opens


Photo: Abbas Kowsari

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mostafa Mirsalim, opened the 4th International Exhibition of the Holy Qoran at the Contemporary Arts Museum on Saturday.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani and a number of the ministry's officials as well as a group of ulama.

Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani said the Muslims should try to comprehend the verities of the Revealed Book in addition to becoming acquainted with its wording.

He added that Qoran the Book of all ages and all arts, old and contemporary, should be gauged by this Divine Scripture.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance said in the flourishing of the Islamic Revolution, the Holy Qoran remained safe from being estranged.

Mirsalim added that young and learned ulama are proud of setting their life in conformity with the teachings of the Qoran.

He said the attractions of the artistic works the Holy Qoran can present absorb all enlightened artists.



Habibi Sends Message to Bosnian PM

Tehran Times Service

SARAJEVO -- Iran's Ambassador to Bosnia, Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian, in a meeting with the Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina on Sunday submitted the congratulatory message of Iran's First Vice-President, Hasan Habibi to the Bosnian PM.

Habibi sent the message on the occasion of the appointment of Haris Silajzic as the chairman of the council of ministers of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Part of Habibi's message reads that the Islamic Republic of Iran always supported Bosnia-Herzegovina at the time of war, adding that Iran is ready to provide Bosnia-Herzegovina with its expertise in relation to reconstruction programs.

Habibi also cabled a separate message to the other prime minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Boro Bosic, wishing him to contribute to expansion of peace and security in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the reconstruction of that country.

Habibi further called for greater promotion of friendly and brotherly relations between the two countries.

Over 600 kg of Narcotics Seized

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- An informed source said on Sunday that some 612 kg of opium were seized in a gunfire with drug traffickers at heights overlooking Torbat-Heidariyeh in northeastern Iran on Saturday.

In related news, some 25 kg of opium concealed in two vehicles were also seized in Torbat-Jam on the same day by the Law Enforcement Forces, IRNA reported.

Ambassador Meets Romanian Speaker

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Iran's Ambassador to Romania Mohammad Reza Morshedzadeh, in Bucharest Saturday, met with the Speaker of the Romanian Senate Petre Roman.

In the meeting, the Romanian speaker called for promotion of parliamentary ties with Iran, IRNA reported.

Extending an invitation to the Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri to visit Bucharest, he said maintaining contact between parliamentarians of the two countries helps consolidate bilateral cooperation and promote economic development.

News in Brief

* Director of the Technical and Vocational Teaching Center of Mohabad announced that over 2000 job seekers in the province received vocational skills certificate. The figure indicates 27% increase compared to the previous year.
* Director General of Khorasan Province Broadcasting Organization announced that 180,000 residents of 95 rural areas have been covered by Channel One and Two of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting corporation.
* Managing Director of Kurdestan Environment Protection said this year migration of over 30,000 birds has been delayed on account of the favorable weather. Every year, these birds migrated to Kurdestan province in the middle of Azar.
* Head of the Housing and Urbanization Organization of Ardebil said that nearly 183,000 square meters of land has been handed over to applicants within the framework of projects for Sabalan, Sina, Rezvan, Beathat, Golestan and Karshenasan townships.
* Gilan Agriculture Organization warned against famine in the province.
* Agriculture manager of Genaveh province announced that 100 tons of cucumbers were produced by half a hectare of the first greenhouse farm in Genaveh. Considering the region's climate, hothouse cultivation can play an important role in expansion of agriculture in the region.
* Some 20,000 tons of dairy products, including pasteurized milk, cheese, yogurt, cream and butter have been yielded in Gorgan Dairy Factor during the current Iranian year, beginning March 21.

WEATHER

The Islamic Republic of Iran Meteorological Organization announced today's weather as follows:

Forecast for Tehran: Max. temp. 10°C; Min. temp. 2°C

Partly cloudy

Warmest Point:
Chah Bahar 22°C

Coldest Point:
Sarab -16°C

Some cities of the world

Cities	Max. °C	Cities	Max. °C
Riyadh	16	Vienna	-1
Istanbul	4	Moscow	-9
Rome	14	Madrid	11
Athens	–	Abu Dhabi	19
London	6	Karachi	–
Paris	3	New Delhi	20
Frankfurt	-3	Kuwait	18



President Inaugurates Rehabilitation Center for Disabled



Photo: Mojtaba Takin

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani here on Sunday opened a rehabilitation and educational center set up by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs for the disabled children of workers.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, President Rafsanjani called for training of laborers as a decisive factor in bolstering the economy and independence of the country, IRNA reported.

He said the Islamic Republic of Iran has acquired valuable experiences in manpower training which should be shared with other developing nations.

"The developing nations taking advantage of Iranian experience would go on training their work force which in turn will enable them to attain real independence," he said.

The president appreciated the performance of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry in establishing the rehabilitation center for the disabled children of laborers and said the government spares no effort to help such centers.

Before the president's remarks, Minister of Labor Houssein Kamali gave a report on the performance of his ministry.

Liberian Tanker Arrives in Iraq

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - An oil tanker carrying the Liberian flag arrived in Iraq on Sunday, the seventh since the implementation of the UN oil-for-food deal in December, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said, as quoted by AFP.

The tanker is expected to load half a million barrels of oil from the offshore Persian Gulf terminal of Mina Al-Bakr, INA added.

Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Rashid said a week ago that the United Nations had approved 26 contracts which Iraq had concluded to sell crude oil.

Under the deal which took effect last month, Iraq can export two billion dollars of oil over six months in order to pay for food and medicine as well as defray UN costs and contribute to 1991 Persian Gulf War reparations.

It was the first easing of UN sanctions since they were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Global Freshwater Supplies in Peril

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The world's supply of clean freshwater, already threatened by growing levels of pollution is growing so scarce in some areas that if current trends continue, two thirds of humanity will suffer, "moderate to severe water stress" within 30 years.

A press release issued by the U.N. Information Center in Tehran added that the report on the freshwater resource warns that the situation not only imperils human health and development on a vast scale, but also the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem on which much of earth's life depends.

"This is clear and convincing evidence," the report said adding, "the world faces a worsening series of local and regional water quality and quantity problems, largely as a result of poor water allocation, wasteful use of the resource and lack of adequate management resources."

British Diplomat Supports Iran-Turkey Gas Deal

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The British Charge d'Affaires to Turkey said that England and European Union support boosting of trade ties between Iran and Turkey.

Talking to *Yeni Yuzil* newspaper in Istanbul, the British diplomat Norman Ling said that London opposes the d'Amato Bill against Iran.

He added that London has difference of opinion with Washington concerning trade with Iran and is against economic sanctions on Iran.

21,000 Trucks Checked in or Out of Borders

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Some 21,000 trucks have checked in or out across the country's borders during the past 9 months, a report from the Country's Transportation Organization said here Sunday.

About 62 percent of the total figure belongs to the Iranian trucks, 29 percent to Turkish and 9 percent to other countries, the report added.

The report said that the figure shows 27 percent increase as compared to the corresponding period last year. Over 3,050 trucks have imported goods to the country and more than 7,570 exported the Iranian goods to other countries.

Most of the trips have been made through the Bazargan border with 26 percent of the total trips, followed by Astara and Nourdoz each by 14 percent, Sarakhs 12, Pul 10 and other border exit ports of the country 24 percent.

The report further said that about 3,480 trucks have arrived in the country to transit through Iranian border.

Industrial Exports Up 40% by Year End

Tehran Time Service

TEHRAN - Minister of Industries Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh said here Saturday that indsutrial exports increased by over 30 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 1996-March 20, 1997).

The minister added that with continuation of the trend in the remaining two months of the year, the industrial exports will register an annual growth rate of 40 percent, IRNA reported.

Textiles experienced the highest growth rate among the industrial exports, 130 percent, he added.



NEMATZADEH

Paris Seeks Help From Financial Institutions

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The French government, seeking to end a nine-day occupation of the Paris headquarters of troubled Bank Credit Foncier de France (CFF), called Sunday for other financial institutions to come to its rescue.

Housing Minister Pierre-Andre Perissol said he hoped an alternative could be found to the government's current plan of transferring 1,500 jobs from the state-run debt-burdened CFF to the Credit Immobilier de France (CIF) cooperative bank, AFP reported.

Staff at the bank, who held its governor Jerome Meysonnier hostage for six days last week before releasing him on Wednesday, have vowed to continue their occupation of its Paris headquarters until at least Tuesday to press the government to withdraw the plan.

England Sees Interest Rate Obstacle to EU Currency

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Prime Minister John Major said the prospect of a British government losing control over domestic interest rates is an argument against ever signing up to a single European currency, BBC television reported on Sunday, as quoted by a Reuter dispatch.

Extracts of an interview with Major to be published in the U.S. monthly the *New Yorker* were quoted by BBC television host David Frost in a discussion with Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister) Kenneth Clarke.

I wouldn't like to be the chancellor of the exchequer who went to (parliament) and said, well, I no longer have any control over interest rates. I am sorry they have gone up three percent, but it's nothing to do with me', Major says.

It's an argument for never going in, and it's one we'll have to confront at some stage, he adds.

The monthly magazine will release more details of its interview with Major today.

The remarks cited by Frost appeared to be a further sign that Major was turning his face against European Monetary Union ahead of a British general election.

But Clarke, the most pro-European member of Major's cabinet, denied that the government had recently shifted to a more sceptical stance.

The prime minister presided over a cabinet (on Thursday) that agreed once again to keep the options open, he said.

Hrer said he was not uncomfortable with Major's stance, but added: I would certainly find it uncomfortable if the decisions that were being taken were likely to lead to high inflation.

Clarke said he had always argued that a single currency should not go ahead in 1999 if the economies of the countries involved were not sufficiently close in their performance.

If countries are going to go into this, they have got to get it right, he said.

Major, who must call an election by May 22, has been battling for months for a united front in his conservative party on the European issue, insisting that the time had not yet come to decide whether Britain should abandon the pound sterling.

Eurosceptic conservatives have been demanding he rule out membership for at least the next five years, arguing that with the party almost 20 points behind in the polls, only this can give it a chance of a fifth consecutive election victory.

Cabinet ministers like Clarke have insisted Britain must keep its options open, and hinted they would like to join.

After a cabinet meeting on Thursday, it appeared the Eurosceptics had advanced their case.

A string of ministers said they had concluded it was very unlikely, but not impossible, that Britain could join a single currency on January 1, 1999, the date it is due to go ahead.

Clarke denied this was a sign that Major was arguing there were reasons for never joining a single currency.

Major will call his cabinet together at his official country residence chequers today for a political discussion which might set the themes for the election campaign.

It is crucial for Britain that parliament should reassert its authority and leadership in this matter, Garel-Jones wrote in the *Sunday Express*.

Persian Gulf States See Boom in Aluminium Industry

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- Persian Gulf Arab oil producers are set to become major aluminium exporters as they push ahead with expansion of their smelters and plans to set up new plants, an official study said on sunday in Abu Dhabi.

The region already controls nearly six percent of the world's total aluminium output and those projects will push the level to around 10 percent, the Persian Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (PGOIC) said, as quoted by an AFP dspatch.

The six Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) states, which hold 45 percent of global oil reserves and 20 percent of the gas, currently have two major aluminium smelters in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

They produced nearly 700,000 tons in 1996 and output is set to surge following the completion this month of an expansion project to boost capacity at the UAE's Dubai smelter to 375,000 tons from 240,000 tons.

Bahrain's Alba, the biggest smelter in the Middle East, is also planning to increase capacity to more than 500,000 tons from 460,000 tons after investing hundreds of millions of dollars in previous expansion projects.

"Since the Persian Gulf region possesses the resources and elements needed for the aluminium industry and PGCC countries are determined to expand their industrial sector, the aluminium sector is expected to develop rapidly and this will contribute to boosting industrial output," said the Doha-based PGOIC, which advises on non-oil industrial policies in the 16-year-old Persian Gulf alliance.

Its study estimated the PGCC countries— Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the UAE—had pumped nearly 4.3 billion dollars into the aluminium industry. The figure does not include spending of nearly 500 million dollars on the latest expansions at the Dubai smelter.

Their exports exceeded 520,000 tons worth around 932 million dollars in 1995, most of which were sold to Japan and South Korea.

Persian Gulf states are planning to build new smelters to take advantage of the strong demand in Japan and other Southeast Asian countries and the recovery of aluminium prices in world markets. Two plants have been on the cards for the past three years in Kuwait and Qatar while the UAE said last month it was planning to build a smelter in Abu Dhabi with private participation.

"The new smelters will push up the total aluminium production in the Persian Gulf to nearly 1.5 million tons, or 10 percent of the world's output," PGOIC said.

"Such an expansion is expected to continue in future at the expense of production in other areas given the existing advantages in the region."

The study was referring to the PGCC's massive gas reserves of around 21 trillion cubic meters (700 trillion cubic feet), the presence of cheap labor and its location in the heart of a vast Asian consumer market.

Such factors have made aluminium and other industrial projects more feasible than in other areas and prompted regional states to pump huge investments into manufacturing in a drive to diversify their economies and lessen reliance on unpredictable oil export earnings.

Total Subsidiary to Set Up Paint Factory in UAE

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - An international company controlled by Total of France is planning to set up a paint factory in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at a cost of 2.5 million dollars.

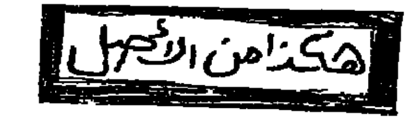
Kalon Group, owned 66 percent by Total, announced Saturday it had signed an agreement to create the joint venture multicoating with the Abu Dhabi-based Al-Hamed Group, AFP reported.

Kalon will supply management and technology and own 15 percent of the factory in Musaffah near Abu Dhabi city while Al-Hamed will hold 85 percent, said Pierre Malmartel, managing director of Kalon's international division.

The project, to be completed at the end of 1997, will produce around 3,000 tons of decorative paints and protective coating per year and will target the UAE and other markets in the Middle East, Malmartel told reporters.

"The project is highly feasible as there is a strong demand. We are planning to boost capacity in future," he said.

Total, one of the biggest oil firms in the world, has large oil concessions in the UAE and other countries in the Middle East.



SPORTS SUMMARY

Tehran Times Service

FOOTBALL

Waddle Inspires Bradford to Cup Glory

LONDON: Former England star Chris Waddle inspired first division strugglers Bradford City to a shock 3-2 win over premiership side Everton in the fourth round of the FA Cup on Saturday. Second division Wrexham also claimed a premiership scalp, beating West Ham 1-0 away in their third round replay, while amateur side woking claimed a late equalizer to force a third-round replay with 1987 winners Coventry City. Wimbledon, league cup semifinalists, held Manchester United 1-1 at Old Trafford with a goal from playmaker Robbie Earle inside injury time after Paul Scholes had put United ahead with four minutes remaining. And Derby reached the fifth-round for the first time in four years by beating Aston Villa 3-1.

Rozental's Goal-Joy Marred by Knee Injury

GLASGOW, Scotland: Chilean star Sebastian Rozental celebrated his first goal for Rangers as the 'treble-chasing' Glasgow giants moved into the fourth-round of the Scottish cup with a 2-0 win over first division St. Johnstone on Saturday. But his celebrations were marred by confirmation that he had damaged ligaments in his knee and will be out of action for at least a week. Erik Bo Andersen was the other goalscorer.

Bastia Crash but Bordeaux Stay in Touch

PARIS: Bastia lost the chance to close the gap on French league leaders Monaco on Saturday when they crashed 1-0 at Marseille to remain six points off the pace. Xavier Graveleine scored for Marseille on the stroke of half time to push his side into the top half of the table and leave Bastia rueing a mumber of missed chances. Fourth-placed Bordeaux moved to within two points of the Corsicans and four of second-placed Paris Saint Germain by hammering struggling nice 4-1 — three of their goals coming in the final eight minutes. Fifth-placed Strasbourg remain level on points with Bordeaux after overcoming Rennes 3-0, while, in the northeastern derby, Nancy were beaten 3-2 by Metz.

Deportivo Lose Again

BADRID: John Toshack's Deportivo failed to halt their New Year slump when they crashed to a shock 1-0 first division defeat away to bottom club Extremadura on Saturday. Deportivo, third in the table behind Real Madrid and Barcelona, have not won a match in four weeks.

Extremadura clinched their win with a goal on the hour by Silvani. In Saturday's other first division clash Valencia were held 1-1 at home by Espanyol.

Australia Beat Norway

SYDNEY, Australia: Australia beat Norway 1-0 at the Sydney football stadium Saturday to clinch the four nations championship.

Robert hooker scored the winning goal after 72 minutes. South Korea won the third place play-off, by beating New Zealand 3-1.

Ajax Install Olsen

THE HAGUE: Denmark's 1986 World Cup captain Morten Olsen was on Saturday officially named as Ajax coach to replace Louis van Gaal from July 1 on a two-year contract. The 47-year-old Olsen, who made a record 102 appearances for Denmark, coached Brondby for three seasons from 1990 and then German club Cologne, where he ended his playing career.

Five Ethiopian Defectors Fly Home

ROME: Five of the sixteen Ethiopian footballers who defected in Italy, finally flew home in the early hours of Saturday morning after deciding not to seek political asylum. The Ethiopian team arrived in Rome from Ethiopia on Monday and were due to fly to Morocco early Tuesday but no one checked in at the airport.

RUGBY UNION

Brive Storm to European Cup Glory

CARDIFF: French club Brive were crowned champions of Europe after sweeping to a magnificent 28-9 victory over English opponents Leicester at the Arms Park here Saturday. The Frenchmen overcame the favorites with a stunning display of attacking rugby and outscored their opponents by four tries to none.

Irish Hooker to Miss Wales Match

LONDON: Ireland's hooker Allen Clarke broke a finger in Northampton's 26-17 cup win over Coventry on Saturday and will miss next Saturday's Five Nations Championship clash against Wales.

Clarke, who came on to replace injured Ireland skipper Keith Wood during last weekend's championship match against France, will be out of action for at least two weeks.

McClain Stops Smith in First Round

PRETORIA — John McClain of the United States stunned the partisan crowd at Carousel Resort just north of here Saturday when he stopped home boy Peter Smith in the first round to take the vacant World Boxing Union (WBU) super *cruiserweight title*.

Smith, the transvaal heavyweight champion, had no answer to the quicker but lighter McClain, who swung straight into action using a snappy and stiff jab.

He dropped the South African with his first clean right cross.

Smith beat the count but appeared to be shaken as he tried to rally for a knock-down of his own.

Instead, McClain landed with combinations to the head to put down Smith a second time.

Smith beat the count but the referee stopped the fight as he felt the South African was in no state to continue. *(AFP)*



KITZBUHEL, Austria (January 25): Austrian skier Fritz Strobl speeds towards the finish to win the Men's World Cup downhill race on the Hahnenkamm's Streif piste in Kitzbuehl. Strobl clocked a winning time of 1:51.58 minutes to win ahead of fellow Austrian Werner Franz and France's Luc Alphand. *(AFP PHOTO)*

Sampras Powers to Australian Open Victory

MELBOURNE, Australia — Pete Sampras crushed unseeded Spaniard Carlos Moya 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 in the Australian Open final Sunday *to edge closer to a place in the* history books.

The world number one from the United States took just one hour 27 minutes to clinch his ninth Grand Slam singles title.

He now moves into fifth place on the all-time winners list and at just 25 is well within reach of Australian Roy Emerson with 12 Grand Slams, Bjorn Borg and Rod Laver on 11 each and Bill Tilden with 10.

The 20-year-old Spaniard, one of the revelations of the tournament after beating defending Boris Becker and second seed Michael Chang, had no answer to Sampras' power in the final.

Sampras broke Moya's service six times, while losing his own service just once, in the second set.

Sampras broke the Spaniard in the fourth game with a long rally ending with a Moya forehand error. Moya cracked again in the eighth game when down 15-40, only to send a weak backhand into the net. The opening set lasted just 22 minutes.

Moya was broken for a third time in the second game of the second set, but he stirred the crowd when he broke Sampras for the first and only time in the match.

The final was whizzing along with the first deuce coming in the 15th game as service games were short affairs.

Sampras broke Moya in the eighth game to lead 5-3 with the top seed at the net to finish off a terrific rally. He served the set out to go two up in just 51 minutes.

The American favorite moved into top gear for the third set. Sampras broke Moya in the third game to lead 2-1 and the Spaniard's fighting spirit then drained in the heat.

Sampras got to 0-40 and three match points in the ninth game of the set and wrapped it up on his first match point.

It was Sampras' second Australian title following his victory over fellow American Todd Martin in straight sets in 1994.

Sampras has won three Wimbledon titles (1993-95), four U.S. Opens (1990, 1993, 1995-96) and now two Australian Opens.

He has now won 14 Grand Slam matches on the trot, having won the U.S. Open, in New York where he beat Chang in straight sets in the final.

Sampras has now won 45 career titles, four behind Becker's 49, who is the leading contemporary title winner behind Jimmy Connors' 109 victories.

Moya will break into the world's top ten at No. 9 on Monday following his remarkable display in Melbourne.

Moya was the fourth unseeded player to reach the Australian final and was bidding to become only the second unseeded player to win following Australian Mark Edmondson in 1976. *(AFP)*

Malysz Holds Off Japanese Rivals to Get Second World Cup Win

HAKUBA, Japan — Adam Malysz of Poland narrowly beat Japanese rivals on the Hakuba Olympic Hill to score his second World Cup Ski Jump victory of the season here Sunday.

Malysz registered 121.0-meter and 125.5-meter jumps for a winning score of 246.7 points on the 120m Large Hill at the venue of next year's Winter Olympics.

"Today, I had two great jumps," Malysz said. "Now, I'm confident of having a long jump if I can catch a good wind."

Malysz also boosted his bid for a medal at the 1998 Olympics.

"This was my third visit here, and I really like the Hill," Malysz said, admitting he had one eye on the Olympics.

Sunday's event was the first World Cup Ski Jumping Competition at the Hill, specially bulit for the games at a cost of 73 million dollars.

Cheered on by 21,000 people, Noriaki Kasai of Japan had a record leap to finish second, while compatriot Masahiko Harada was third.

Dieter Thoma, second in the World Cup standings, had jumps of 117m and 128.5m, to finish fourth.

Malysz, second after the first jump, won top style marks, to step up pressure on Kasai, the last jumper in the second round.

Kasai leaped a record 131.5 meters and finished in first place after the first jump. But the 24-year-old Japanese had a mediocre 117m jump with his second attempt, falling short of Malysz's score.

But Kasai was happy with his second place. "I'm really pleased with the result," Kasai said, crediting favorable winds for his reord jump.

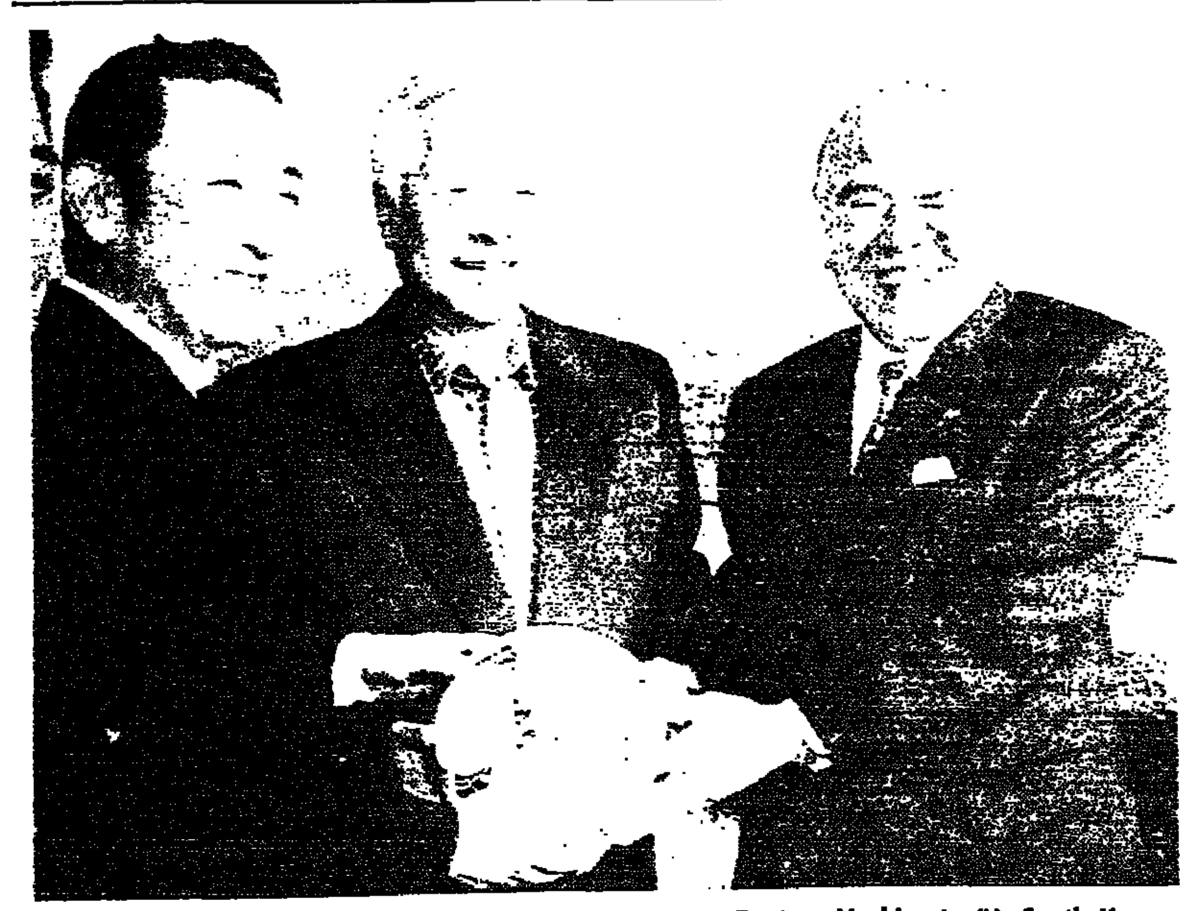
"Without the wind, I could not make it."

Harada, who has never come higher than 18th this season, had solid jumps of 117m and 130m for a total of 243.2 points.

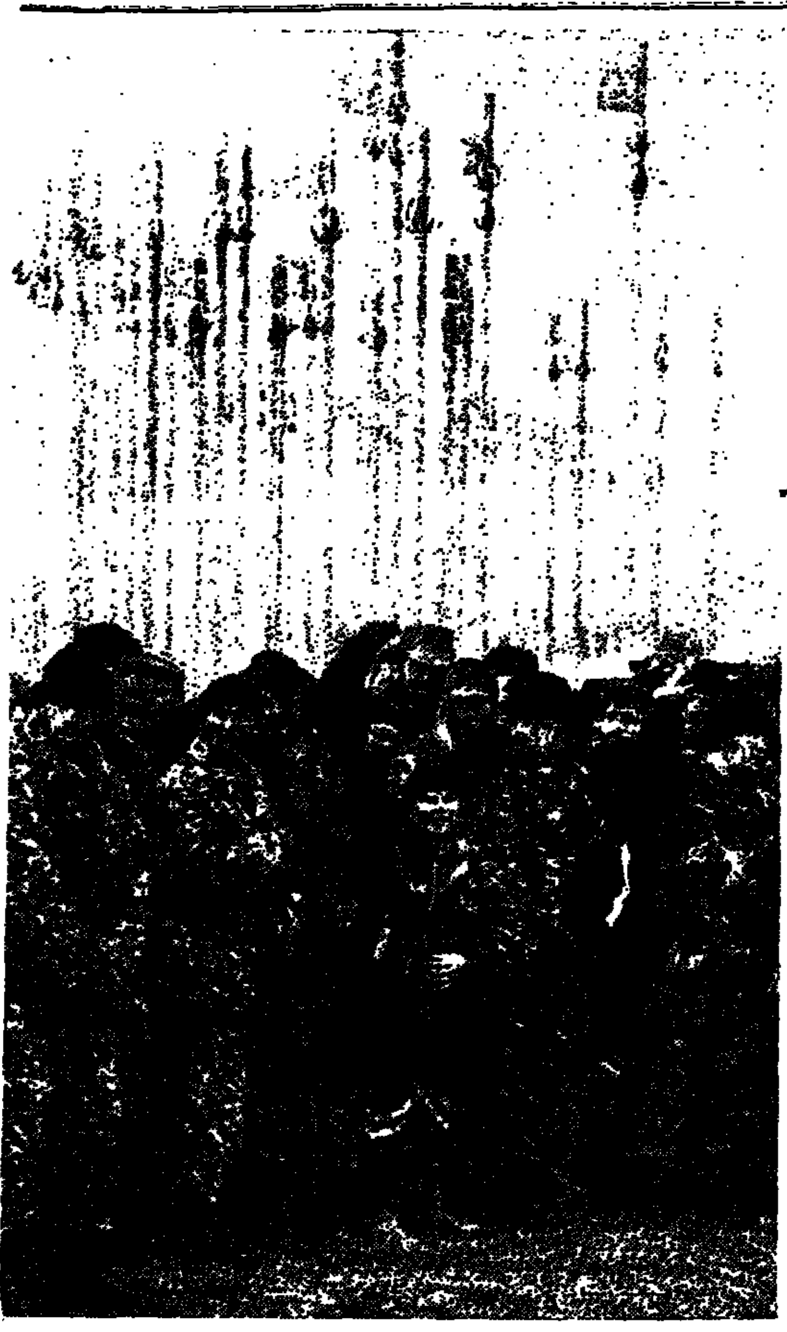
The Large Hill competition was delayed by nearly three hours due to heavy snow, which confounded World Cup leaders, including defending World Cup champion Andreas Goldberger, who finished 22th after two poor jumps.

With the victory, Malysz increased his overall point total to 517, up to seventh from eighth.

Thoma gained 50 points to 824, narrowing the gap with World Cup leader Primoz Peterka of Slovenia on 832 points. Peterka pulled out of all the events in Japan. *(AFP)*



BEPPU, Japan (January 26): (L-R) Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (L), South Korean President Kim Young Sam (C) and Oita prefecture Governor Morihiko Hiramatsu hold a soccer ball at a *Beppu hotel, Oita prefecture*, in Japan's southwestern hot spring resort. Japan and South Korea will host the soccer 2002 World Cup football, and Oita is one of the venues in Japan. *(AFP PHOTO)*



GROZNY, Chechnya, Russian Federation (January 25): Chechen fighters shout slogans and clench fists during an election campaign rally in the central square of the village of Tsatsan Yurtge outside Grozny. Chechnya will hold presidential and parliamentary elections on January 27 which will determine the future of the Caucasus republic following the departure Russian troops after a 21-month war with Russia. In the background flagpoles with flags showing Islamic symbol.

(AFP PHOTO)

Arabs Keep Defense Spending High Despite Lower Income

ABU DHABI – Arab countries are spending more than a quarter of their total expenditure on defense despite budget deficits caused by lower income.

According to official figures, spending on arms purchases, defense and security in the 22-member Arab League accounted for 25.61 percent of their total 1995 expenditure of around 156.69 billion dollars.

The level has remained high over the past decade despite a sharp decline in their revenues mainly because of a drop in oil prices.

The crude export earnings of Arab oil producers plunged to nearly $97.8 billion in 1995 from around 212 billion dollars in 1981, when oil prices were as high as 30 dollars compared with 16.80 dollars in 1995.

In terms of the size of defense expenditure, Saudi Arabia remained on the top of the list. Its defense and security spending accounted for 31.08 percent of its total 1995 expenditure of around 40 billion dollars, meaning the Persian Gulf Kingdom spent nearly 12.4 billion dollars on the military sector.

Oman emerged the biggest defense spender in the Persian Gulf in comparison to its total expenditure, with a ratio of 43.3 percent in 1995.

Defense spending stood at 36 percent in Qatar, 32.7 percent in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 29.2 percent in Kuwait and 27.6 percent in Bahrain.

The 360-page report, released by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) on Saturday, gave no figures for Iraq, which was the biggest Arab defense spender before the United Nations punished it with crippling sanctions for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Its military machine, once the most powerful in the Arab region, was decimated by the ensuing Persian Gulf war and ongoing UN programs to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction.

Saudi Arabia and its partners in the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) have sought to bolster their armies since the 1990-91 Persian Gulf conflict.

The report did not include figures on arms purchases by the PGCC but military experts estimated them at more than two billion dollars a year.

(AFP)

Damascus Calls For U.S. Impartiality in peace Process

DAMASCUS — Syria Sunday said the United States is only an Israeli intermediary in the Middle East peace process and called on it to be an honest broker instead.

The statement, published in the official ruling party newspaper *Al-Baath*, came the day after U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright took office.

Al-Baath said, "We are asking the United States to swap the role of intermediary partial to Israel for that of an effective party determined to keep its commitments and promises in the letter of guarantees" written by the United States in 1991 to the parties involved in the peace process.

Syrian-Israeli peace talks have been frozen since February last year.

Damascus demands that Israel agree to return the Golan Heights, captured during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, before peace talks begin.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he wanted to resume the talks without any preconditions.

However, he has ruled out a return of the Golan to Syria, but says Damascus is free to bring the issue of territorial compromise to the negotiating table.

Al-Baath accused Israel's ruling Likud Party-led coalition of "posing conditions including a latent defect that cancels out commitments made by the previous Israeli government."

Those conditions include Netanyahu's proposal for "a resumption of talks without preconditions, (his) 'Lebanon first' proposal and refusal to withdraw from the Golan," the newspaper said.

Assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, leader of the previous, Labor Party-led government, was reported to have agreed to return the Golan to Syria in return for a peace treaty, but no agreement was signed.

But Netanyahu said he did not consider himself "tied to the verbal commitments given by the previous government on a withdrawal from the Golan," an Israeli official said.

The "Lebanon first" proposal concerned concluding a peace with Lebanon first, but Lebanon and Syria have both insisted on a comprehensive deal involving both countries.

A senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official said Friday that Israel and Syria have been exchanging documents on a formula for resuming peace talks but have not succeeded in reaching an agreement to return to the negotiating table.

But the official said Syria has responded by imposing demands that Israel considers unacceptable.

(AFP)

Taleban Capture Two More Afghan Districts

KABUL — The Taleban religious militia claimed Sunday to have captured two districts in the strategic Ghorband Valley in northern Afghanistan and that rival soldiers switched sides.

"Shinwari and Siagird districts in Ghorband Valley were captured by the Mujahedeen of the Islamic Army yesterday (Saturday)," the Taleban-controlled radio Shariat announced in its morning bulletin.

The report could not immediately be confirmed.

Ghorband Valley is located 30 kilometers (18 miles) west of Jabul Siraj town which was seized by the militia in a dramatic offensive last week.

The valley was controlled by Abdul Karim Khalili of the Shia Hezb-i-Wahdat, a component of an anti-Taleban alliance which also includes forces of northern warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam and the ousted government's Defense Minister Ahmad Shah Masood.

The valley links Parwan Province with Khalili's Shia dominated stronghold of Bamian Province.

The Taleban will have to fight the opposition forces in the narrow valleys of Salang, Panjsher and Ghorband before advancing to the northern provinces controlled by Dostam's tough Uzbek militia.

Analysts said the Taleban were likely to consolidate their gains to avert any possible ambush from rival troops because their engagements in the narrow valleys could make the Taleban forces over-stretched and vulnerable.

The religious militia lost more than 600 fighters in their previous march into the Salang Valley in October as Masood forces captured the valley's exit gate, Jabul Siraj town, 77 kilometers (48 miles) north of the Afghan capital Kabul.

The Taleban recent military gains include the capture of the key Bagram Airbase, Charikar city and Jabul Siraj, gateway to Salang and Gulbahar district at the mouth of Masood's bastion of Panjsher Valley.

(AFP)

Iraq Attacks Britain for Sending Diplomats to Kurdistan

BAGHDAD – Iraq on Sunday attacked Britain and Turkey after British diplomats based in Ankara traveled to Kurdish-held northern Iraq.

"We denounce Britain for sending its diplomats into the region of Salahuddin and Arbil, and we consider this act as a violation of our sovereignty," the official *Ath-Thawra* newspaper said.

"We put full responsibility on Turkey for having allowed the diplomats to cross the border without the greenlight from the Iraqi government," the newspaper said.

"It is not the right of Britain nor of any other country to violate Iraq's sovereignty," the paper said.

Iraq withdrew from its northern territory after a Kurdish uprising in 1991, but regained a foothold there at the end of August when it helped a Kurdish faction capture territory from a rival group.

The Iraqi National Congress, a London-based umbrella group for the opposition, said that a British Embassy delegation from Ankara traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan on January 19.

The delegation, which visited the cities of Arbil and Salahuddin, met Kurdish officials and other INC delegates.

(AFP)

Belgrade Students Celebrate One Week of Stand-Off With Police

BELGRADE – Tired but happy, Belgrade students prepared Sunday to celebrate one straight week of facing off riot police, who are trying to prevent them marching through central Belgrade.

"We have already achieved an extraordinary thing. We have given the people of Belgrade the will to smile again," Aleksander Djukic, a member of the students' coordinating committee said.

"For this reason alone, we will have enough energy to continue for the weeks, the months that we have to," he said.

Students have been trying to stay on the streets five minutes longer than the riot police, as part of the protests which have been going on for over two months at the authorities' refusal to recognize opposition election gains.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

TEHRAN...

Taleban should realize that they are Afghans and should not work for the interests of others.

As for the negative repercussions of the continuation of war in Afghanistan, Rabbani reiterated that not only it threatens the Afghans but it certainly threatens the security of the region.

"Security in Afghanistan is inseparable from that of the whole region," Rabbani underlined.

Rabbani concluded by saying that the Taleban cannot materialize their objectives through continuation of bloodshed and fratricide in Afghanistan and called on them to sit at the negotiation table with other Afghan groups in order to put an end to the conflicts in the war-torn country.

(Contd from Pg. 1)

BOSNIAN...

Koljevic had shot himself in the head at his office at Pale, the Bosnian Serb stronghold outside of the capital Sarajevo.

A NATO helicopter rushed him to a Belgrade military hospital the next day, where he underwent brain surgery for several hours.

A former Sarejevo university professor in English literature, with a special interest in Shakespeare, Koljevic was regarded as a moderate.

He took part in negotiations in the United States that resulted in the Dayton peace accords ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, signed at the end of 1995.

Born in Banja Luka, today a part of Republika Srpska, Koljevic was elected in 1990 as a member of the Bosnia-Herzegovina presidency.

He stood down at the start of the war in Bosnia in April 1992, re-emerging a month later as a member of the Republika Srpska presidency.

Later he became one of two vice-presidents at the side of Biljana Plavsic, the current president of the Bosnian Serb entity that controls nearly half of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The former leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic, who is wanted by a UN tribunal for alleged war crimes, made Koljevic a privileged interlocutor with international mediators.

But their relations deteriorated, as Karadzic never fully embraced the Dayton accords.

Having good ties with Belgrade and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Koljevic appeared to be a possible successor to Karadzic when the latter exited the political limelight in July in the face of international pressure.

But when hardliners prevailed in the Bosnian Serb leadership, Koljevic lost his job as vice-president following the elections held in Bosnia last September.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

CHECHENS...

who also proved a flexible negotiator in ending the war, in which about 50,000 people died, according to the Russian human rights group memorial.

It was Maskhadov, 45, who signed an accord August 31, 1996, with then Kremlin Security Adviser Alexander Lebed agreeing to freeze any final decision on Chechnya's status for up to five years.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

AFGHANISTAN...

only a political solution can resolve the crisis of this country.

The deplorable continuation of war in Afghanistan will lead to more destruction of this country, the Iranian foreign minister said.

In a declaration issued at the end of the Afghanistan Peace Conference, the participants expressed concern over the deplorable continuation of war in Afghanistan and called for an immediate cease-fire, creation of a safe and secure environment in Kabul and exchange of prisoners of war.

The participants also called for constructive dialogue among Afghan parties with a view to find a durable settlement and establish a government acceptable to all factions in that country.

They reaffirmed their conviction that participation and sharing of power by all parties in the structure of national government is indispensable and imperative.

They further underlined the need for respecting legitimate and inalienable rights of Muslim people of Afghanistan to decide their own destiny in exercising the national will of Afghan people.

While expressing appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations and Organization of the Islamic Conference for resolving the Afghan crisis, Afghan leaders called for serious support of the United Nations and other international organizations for intra-Afghan dialogue.

The participants drew the attention of the international community, specially the relevant international relief agencies to the urgent need for humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan.

Afghan leaders called on the international community to prevent foreign interference in order to facilitate attainment of peace in the war-torn Afghanistan.

It was also decided that a commission consisting of persons with good will be established for the purpose of following up intra-Afghan dialogue.

In conclusion, the participants in Afghanistan Peace Conference expressed gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for its hospitality and efforts to pave the way for intra-Afghan meeting.

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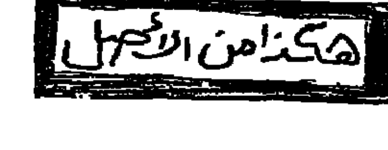
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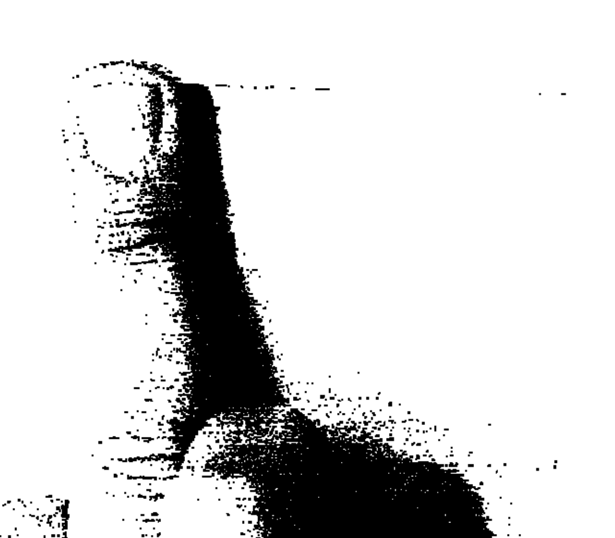
the ministerial portfolio between 1982 and 1992.

The conservative candidate for the presidency is 53-year-old Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri.

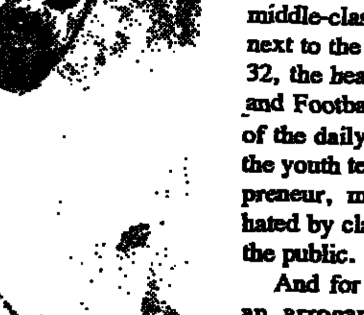
The other politician to have officially declared his candidacy is former Information minister Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri who is considered a hardliner.

Reyshahri, who is secretary of the Association for Defending Islamic Values (ADVIR), seeks to run on a platform to promote Islamic values by fighting Western cultural inroads.





The Hated Uday Survives



BAGHDAD, Iraq: Uday Hussein, the eldest son of President Saddam Hussein, in Baghdad supervises the training exercises of President Hussein's vanguards. Iraqi forces. *(AFP PHOTO)*

The 12 December attempt on the life of Uday Saddam Hussein, the eldest son of the Iraqi president, cannot but dissipate the surge of optimism among Iraqis which was created by the 10 December reopening of the Turkish pipeline to launch limited oil exports. Iraqi confidence in the future was shaken because the attack on Uday could signify conflict within the regime or, rather less likely, an increasingly efficient opposition. The one thing the Iraqi people do not want is to compound the destructive impact of more than six years of punitive sanctions with internal instability and violence. The combination of the two could fracture the country.

Few Iraqis sympathize with Uday, reported to have light injuries, or would have wept for him if he had been killed in the shooting in the green and pleasant upper middle-class suburb of Mansur, next to the racecourse. For Uday, 32, the head of the Iraqi Olympic and Football Associations, owner of the daily *Babel* newspaper and the youth television station, entrepreneur, militia commandant, is hated by clansmen and feared by the public.

And for good reason. Uday is an arrogant, luxury-living and avaricious man; brutal, unpredictable and unstable. He was imprisoned by his father for murdering a family retainer, served a term of exile because he disagreed with his father's second marriage and expropriated when Saddam thought Uday's wealth might be used to fund a coup. Uday's brutal excesses drove Saddam's sons-in-law and daughters to defect to Jordan, where they leaked information to the CIA which enabled Washington to maintain the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq in August 1990 after it invaded Kuwait.

And when the sons-in-law repented and went home in February Uday slaughtered them, along with retainers and relatives. This has led to speculation that Uday's attackers are more likely to be his personal enemies rather than the so fair ineffective opposition in exile, more than ever enfeebled by the expulsion in September of its operatives from Arbil in the Kurdistan.

Highly adept at survival, Saddam Hussein (who has, reportedly, evaded at least two, perhaps three, attempts this year) is not likely to choose as his successor a loose canon like Uday, who seems to be a *pro tem* crown prince rather than heir apparent. Saddam has never given Uday a major post in the regime, although he has played



a key public relations role. He has never held a command in the army; instead he set up his own independent force to counter any possible army coup. This angered the regulars.

If a son is to succeed, then the younger son, Qusay, who oversees Saddam's internal intelligence agencies, would seem the likelier choice. Uday's demise would be a shock to the first family and the regime but it would not precipitate the end of Saddam's rule unless it set off an internal conflict within Saddam's Takrit clan.

Oil to Flow Again

The flow of Iraqi oil, the first in over six and a half years, through the Turkish pipeline was celeberated by ordinary Iraqis, rightly or wrongly, as the beginning of the end of deprivation and isolation. The oil is being pumped to a Turkish terminal on the Mediterranean coast under a UN scheme, signed last May, allowing Iraq to export $2bn worth of oil over six months (with the option to renew) to purchase desperately needed food and medical supplies.

However, the oil-for-food scheme will not meet the demands of the Iraqi people or help to rebuild the country's humanitarian infrastructure wrecked by the punitive sanctions regime. For the oil-for-food revenue is to be nearly halved, with $1.06bn going on food and medical supplies for the 18 million Iraqis who live under government rule and $260m, 13 percent, designated for relief supplies for the 3,000,000 people in Iraqi Kurdistan. Of this total of $1.32bn, $210m will be spent on medicines and medical supplies and $805m for flour, rice, cooking oil and sugar, doubling the basic ration provided by the government to every inhabitant of the country.

This will leave just $17m for other essential purchases, such as chemicals for sewage treatment, parts for water pumping equipment and fertilisers. Unless Iraq is in a position to repair its infrastructure and its health and education facilities, the oil-for-food plan will only provide a bare subsistence to the Iraqi people, 750,000 of whom have died from malnutrition and lack of medicines since August 1990, the present rate being 10,000 a month, 4,500 of them children under five. And since supplies are unlikely to reach Iraq for two to three months, Iraqis will go on dying at this rate until this happens. Of total revenue from the oil-for-food deal, $800m, 40 percent, will not to go for food at all. The UN will receive $200m for its arms monitoring operation and $600m to pay reparations to victims of the invasion of Kuwait.

Turkey and Jordan expect a boom in trade with Iraq following the implementation of the deal. But the fixed revenue and limited number of permitted imports could disappoint them. Ankara estimates that it could earn $500m in the first six months. Although Turkey will receive transit dues, most of this should be from the sale of Turkish agricultural and manufactured goods under an oil-for-food memorandum of understanding signed last July. The Turkish state oil company was the first to sign a contract for Iraqi oil. The present annual value of exports is $125-200m compared with $2.5bn in 1988.

Jordan has recently attempted to mend relations with Iraq after 17 months of antagonism following the granting of sanctuary to Saddam Hussein's defecting sons-in-law . This process of renewal was given a boost when King Hussein and Prime Minister Kabariti met Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhammad Sahaf in Amman in the first week of December. Before the 1991 Persian Gulf war Jordan earned more than $500m a year in transit dues and from trade with Iraq; the present value of trade is $220m and consists of a barter arrangement of goods for oil.

Before the Persian Gulf crisis Iraq earned $16bn a year from oil exports, it imported two thirds of its food supplies and $500m a year in medical supplies. Over the six years of sanctions Iraq has lost $90-100bn in revenues and the country's infrastructure has been devastated. Given the present state of affairs it is clear that the oil-for-food deal will not uplift Iraq or its people.

(Curtesy: Middle East International December 96).

Nicaragua's Rocky Road to Democracy

Nicoletta Wanger

When Violeta Chamorro became president in 1990, Nicaragua was divided, traumatized by civil war, and on the verge of bankruptcy. Today it is firmly on the road to democracy, experiencing tentative economic growth, and moving slowly toward political stability. But the government of newly elected President Arnoldo Aleman faces several major challenges.

In 1990, when she was a candidate for the presidency, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro personified peace to many of her countrymen. She was-and is-not a politician, but an integrating figure. Following her political instinct, which is coupled with a strong sense of family, she promised an end to confrontation, while the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) headed by the brothers Daniel and Humberto Ortega could offer only a continuation of its Marxist-Leninist revolution. Nicaragua's voters put a swift end to that.

But this past October, in the time leading up to the elections, hardly anyone spoke of the *Union Nacional Opositora* (UNO), the party that had brought Violeta Chamorro into office six years earlier. Of the 24 presidential candidates in the fragmented Nicaraguan political landscape, only two could be taken seriously: Arnoldo Aleman of the six-party coalition known as the *Alianza Liberal*, and former Sandinista president



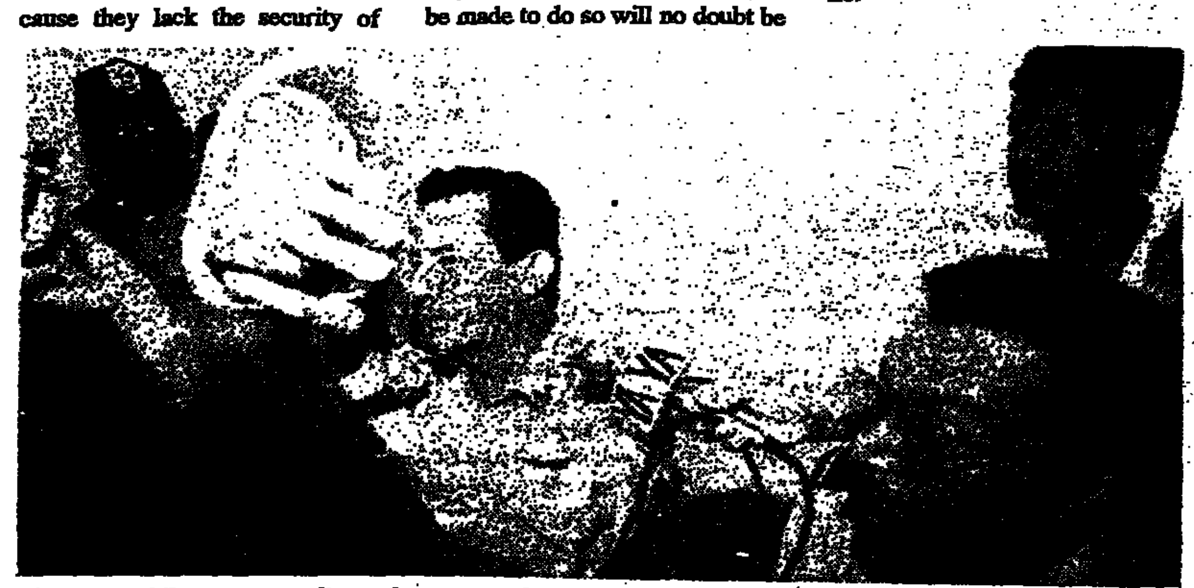
U.S. Secretary of State James Baker (L) meets President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua (R) June 18. The meeting follows a Central American and Panamanian summit on economics. that ended 17 June. *(AFP PHOTO)*

Daniel Ortega, who promised to be a "president for all." But too many people recalled that this was precisely what Ortega had not been back in the 1980s. Violeta Chamorro took over a country on the verge of bankruptcy, with an inflation rate of about 30,000% and debts of some $11.5 billion. There is a story, now grown almost legendary, about how Arnoldo Aleman, newly elected as mayor of Managua in 1990, found just $2,500 left in the treasury after years of Sandinista rule. Equally legendary are the laws which the Sandindistas passed in the three-month interim between their defeat in the 1990 elections and the inauguration of the new Chamorro government, making possible what has come to be known as the *"pinata"*. This legislation enabled the outgoing rulers to literally plunder the country, legalising expropriations of properties which were then distributed to a certain circle of supporters, finagling sales of homes and land at symbolic prices, transferring ownership of state property to themselves, and similar machinations.

This process provided the top FSLN leadership with lucrative retirement. It also saddled the new government with huge debts, administrative chaos, and the most serious problem, which the Chamorro regime proved unable to resolve and which will doubtless be a source of headache to future governments as well: the problem of land ownership. No one wishing to purchase a piece of land in Nicaragua today can feel secure that, after the deal is concluded, a former owner of the property will not popup laying claim to it. The situation arises in countless variations: land once confiscated but resold several times over since then; expropriated property for which the state paid full, partial or no compensation; state-held land returned to its original owners, or not returned, or only partly returned. In Nicaragua, where about 40% of the population draw their livelihood from agriculture, the absence of a deed to a piece of property can have fatal consequences, possibly the worst of which is that small and medium-size producers can get no bank credits for investments because they lack the security of clear title. The question of land ownership has become the key issue hampering economic recovery.

The new president, Arnoldo Aleman, sees a resolution of the land question as a top priority. Small landholders and cooperatives who benefited from the Sandinistas' expropriations will be permitted to keep their land; former owners are to be compensated by the government, a process which the Alianza Liberal expects will cost $500 million. But larger beneficiaries of the Sandinistas' shenanigans will be expected to pay fair market price for their properties or return them to the original owners. One of the first to be made to do so will no doubt be Daniel Ortega, who reportedly paid a symbolic price of $1,000 for his residence in Managua.

The changeover from a state of war to peace came during Violeta Chamorro's term of office. But it became apparent soon after the 1990 elections, which were held while the Sandinistan constitution was still in force, that the price of social and political peace would be substandtial. The agreements between the Sandinistas and newly elected President Chamorro, along with her presidential minister and son-in-law Antonio Lacayo-who was the real power behind the throne-when she took office, never became entirely public.



Nicaragua: Nicaraguan police sub commander Eduardo Cuadra holds an explosive device during a press conference in Managua. Police officials said they arrested two men who were going to use the explosive to assassinate President Arnoldo Aleman during his swearin in ceremony. *(AFP PHOTO)*

Crowd Stranded on Ice in Canadian Lake

TORONTO – Nearly 100 people – most of them fishermen – remained trapped on an ice floe in a Canadian lake Saturday after a huge fissure in the ice suddenly appeared, Canadian Armed Forces sources said.

"Two hundred twenty people plus two dogs" were airlifted from the middle of the 2,000-square-kilometer (800-square-mile) Simcoe Lake by three armed forces helicopters, military spokesman Robert Frank said.

There were no casualties, according to police, but rescue operations were halted by strong gusts of wind and heavy snow on the lake, 60 kilometers (37.5 miles) north of Toronto. (AFP)

Honeymoon Cut Short by Shark Attack

BRISBANE, Australia – A 27-year-old Australian man was recovering Sunday after his honeymoon was cut short when he was mauled by a shark off a barrier reef island.

Derrick Burrows, from the southern city of Melbourne, was cooling off in the water near a yacht he had chartered with his new wife when the shark attacked Saturday off Whitsunday Island.

"It felt like a bear hug on my leg ... and then I thought it might have been a shark," he told reporters outside hospital.

Mackay base hospital spokesman said Burrows was "cheerful but sore" with his leg in plaster after microsurgery to repair two deep lacerations to his calf. (AFP)

String of Blasts Rock Kashmir as Republic Day Ends

SRINAGAR, India – A string of explosions rocked parts of Kashmir after India's Republic Day celebrations ended Sunday in the troubled Himalayan state, officials here said.

A Kashmir state government spokesman said a landmine went off barely 100 metres (330 feet) from the fortified Bakshi Stadium after the ceremonial parade ended in the complex.

The blast, which occurred just after soldiers vacated the stadium, smashed windowpanes of a hospital and damaged fencing of a park. There were no casualties.

About 1,000 people, mainly government officials, witnessed a police and military parade in the stadium as hundreds of army and paramilitary troops stood guard.

The Bakshi Stadium celebrations began after a Kashmir minister, Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah, unfurled the Indian tricolour.

A third explosion occurred outside a Hindu temple in Jammu, he said and added the blast brought down an outer wall of the religious complex.

No one was injured in the attack near the temple, the official said, adding there were two separate explosions on Saturday night in the southern Himalayan districts of Anantnag and Doda.

Indian troops earlier Sunday defused three landmines near security bunkers, and went on alert to prevent bomb or rocket attacks.

In New Delhi, the military displayed a pilotless plane called "Lakshya" and a surface-to-surface missile named "Prithvi" and wrapped up the two-hour show with fly-pasts and aerial acrobatics with Mig-29 fighter jets.

It has a range of 200 kilometers (125 miles) and can carry a one-ton warhead. Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars, has also voiced concern over the Prithvi.

The pageant was viewed by President Basdeo Panday of Trinidad and Tobago, who was the chief guest, and Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma, along with thousands of people assembled along the winding parade route.

India, which ended two centuries of British colonial rule in 1947, was declared a republic on January 26, 1950. The day is observed each year with military parades and cultural functions. (AFP)

Madagascar Cyclone Leaves Over 100 Dead

ANTANANARIVO – More than 100 people died in a Madagascar cyclone that swept through the island's southern tip leaving many villages destroyed, state radio said on Sunday.

It said it used high frequency radio to contact local authorities in southeast Madagascar after all telephone links to the area were cut by the cyclone which first started to pummel the Indian Ocean island on Friday.

Church bells in the villages affected by the cyclone rang continually as bodies were pulled from the water, the radio said.

The radio said local authorities criticized the slow pace of a rescue effort.

There is a total lack of boats bringing aid to the thousands and thousands of stranded victims, the radio said.

The Interior Ministry's National Relief Committee (NRC) said the first medical teams and military personnel were due to fly to the area on Monday. (Reuter)

Korean Union Threatens New Strike at Huge Rally

SEOUL – The leader of South Korea's outlawed union group, addressing the largest protest rally yet against a new labour law, on Sunday vowed to advance the date of fresh strikes unless the bill was scrapped.

If our demands are not met we warn we will launch an all-out stoppage originally planned for February 18 earlier than that, Kwon Young-Kil told a crowd estimated by organizers at 200,000 in Seoul. Police put the size of the crowd at 55,000 and witnesses said the total was probably somewhere in between.

It was Kwon's first public appearance since he emerged from hiding at a cathedral with six union deputies last Friday after threats to arrest them for organizing almost four weeks of strikes were lifted.

President Lim Young-Sam, bowing to domestic pressure and stung by international criticism, last week agreed to send the controversial law back to Parliament for revision. But he insisted it would not be voided.

The outlawed confederation of Korean Trade Unions is maintaining its pressure on the government with one day of strikes each week on Wednesdays. (Reuter)

Five Police Injured in Clashes With Albanian Protestors

TIRANA – Five police officers were slightly injured Sunday as Albanian demonstrators clashed Sunday in central Tirana with riot police, who fought back with water cannons.

The officers were injured as thousands of ralliers protesting the collapse of pyramid savings schemes threw stones at police lines in the central Skanderberg Square.

The demonstrations Sunday were taking place despite a government pledge that those who lost out in the financial scandal would be reimbursed.

Other incidents were reported in separate demonstrations across Albania, most notably at Patos where a petrol station was burned, and at Lushnja, the scene of violent clashes between protestors and police on Friday and Sturday.

Seven other police officers were injured in clashes at Vloree, while the headquarters of President Sali Berisha's Democratic Party in the town of Korcea were ransacked.

Demonstrators protesting the government's role in the financial collapse have called for Berisha's team to resign and for fresh elections to be held. (AFP)

Sick Police Chief Freed in Peruvian Hostage Crisis

LIMA, PERU (JAN. 25): A member of the Peruvian special operations unit takes cover behind a guard house just outside the outer wall of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, Peru, after two bursts of semi-automatic weapons were fired from within the residence. It has been 39 days since members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement seized the residence and are keeping 73 hostages. (AFP PHOTO)

LIMA – Marxist guerrillas holding VIP hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence freed a sick police chief early on Sunday, but his release did little to reduce tensions in the 40-day standoff.

The Red Cross identified the freed hostage as national police General Jose Rivas Rodriguez, who was wheeled out of the compound on a stretcher flanked by Red Cross officials and Bishop Juan Luis Cipriani.

Lying face up with his bare feet sticking out from under a blanket, Rodriguez was taken to an ambulance and driven to a nearby police hospital.

International Committee of the Red Cross representative Michel Mining said the rebels agreed to free Rodriguez on medical grounds. He did not say what was wrong with him.

The heavily-armed Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement rebels are still holding 72 hostages.

Rodriguez was the first hostage to be freed since Jan.17 and his release followed a day of tense posturing with rebels firing warning shots into the air in response to what they called provocative movements by the police outside. (Reuter)

Heavy Rains, Tornadoes Hit the United States

SAN FRANCISCO – Residents of northern California sandbagged their homes and bought supplies as they anxiously watched swirling brown rivers rise again swollen by a Pacific rain storm.

In Alabama and Tennessee in southeastern United States, residents cleaned up the debris left by tornadoes that whipped through the two states on Friday, toppling trees, ripping off roofs and rupturing gas lines. One person was killed.

In Canada, police and military units resumed efforts to rescue hundreds of fishermen who spent a freezing night stranded on a shifting ice floe on a lake north of Toronto.

Heavy rain caused mudslides and swelled rivers in northern California on Saturday, raising fears of a second round of devastating floods in less than a month.

A Pacific storm brought part of a hillside crashing down on U.S. highway 50 in the Sierra Nevada mountains, forcing the closure of one of the main routes from California to Nevada.

There's a mass of mud and trees and rocks out there on the roadway, said Pat Miller, spokeswoman for the California Department of Transportation.

The slide damaged or destroyed three houses and swept two or three cars into a river, she said. The occupants were rescued and there were no reports of deaths or injuries. (Reuter)

Thousands of Thai Villagers Converge on Government House

BANGKOK – Thousands of Thai villagers joined a protest Sunday to demand government action on behalf of those suffering from the effects of dam and development projects, land rights disputes and agricultural policies.

Around 8,000 farmers and villagers had gathered outside government house on Sunday and more were expected to join them, police at the scene said.

The rural protesters came with food, cooking pots and makeshift tents so they could stay until the government acted.

"I plan to stay here one or two months until the government comes up with solutions to our problems. Our group will provide more food. It is on the way," one of the demonstraters said. (AFP)



SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates (Jan. 25): Emiratis wait for the tow truck with their new car which stalled in a flooded street in Sharjah after rare heavy rains. The bad weather caused electricity cuts, school closures, traffic jams and road accidents. (AFP PHOTO)

British Soldier Hurt by Suspected IRA Bomb

BELFAST – An off-duty British soldier was wounded in a suspected IRA booby-trap bomb attack in the country town of Ballynahinch in Northern Ireland early on Sunday.

Security sources said he was slightly injured when his parked car exploded as he and two colleagues were close to it. As he walked forward to check it, it exploded, a police spokesman said.

The explosion appeared to be the latest in a string of attacks on soldiers and police mounted by the banned Irish Republican Army, British security sources said.

The off-duty soldiers, believed to be from a nearby army base at Ballykinlar in county down, had left the vehicle in a car park late on Saturday night. (Reuter)



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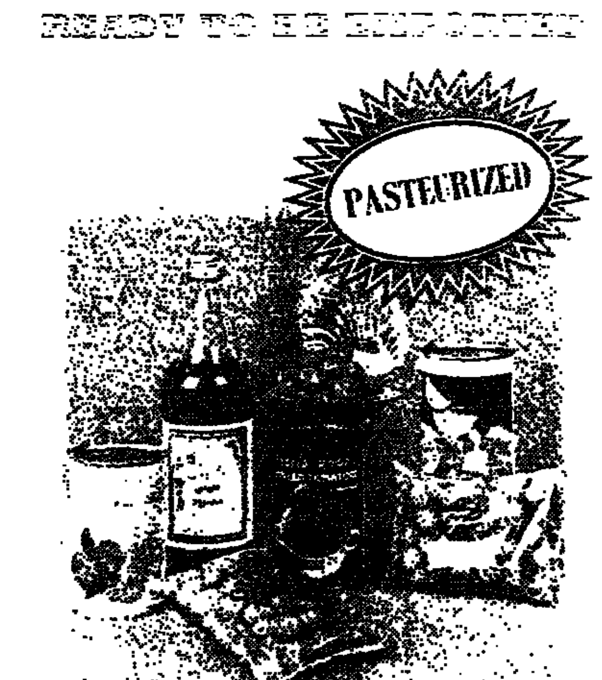
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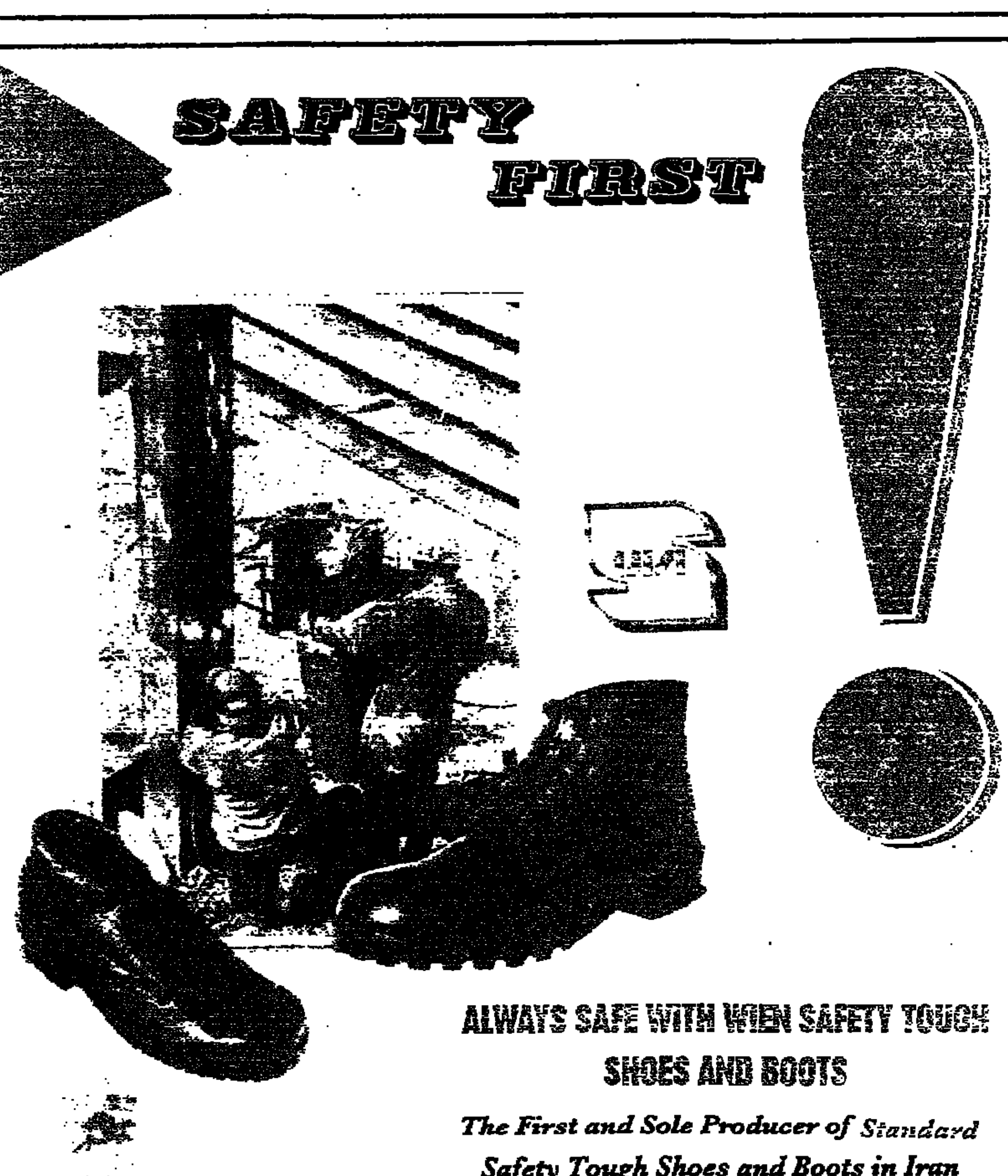


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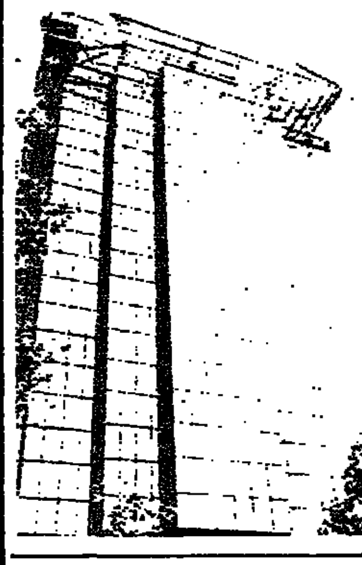
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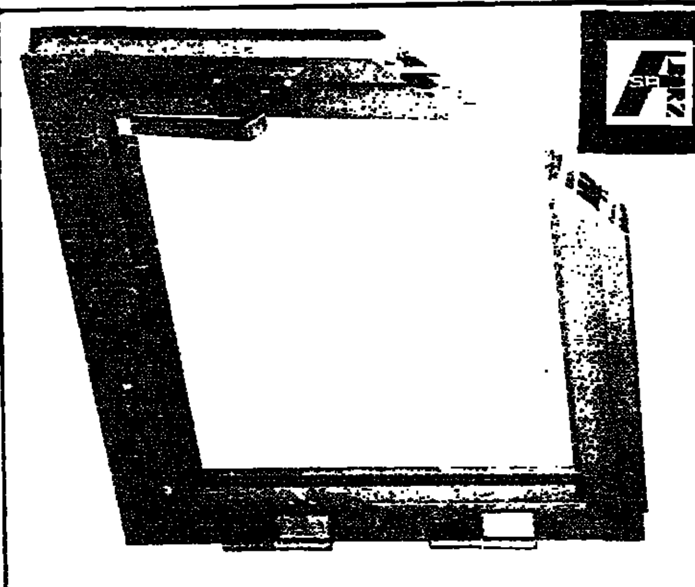
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Fasten Your Safety Belts

Last year saw a big rise in the number of jet-airliner crashes. Worse lies ahead. That is spurring a new approach to air safety.

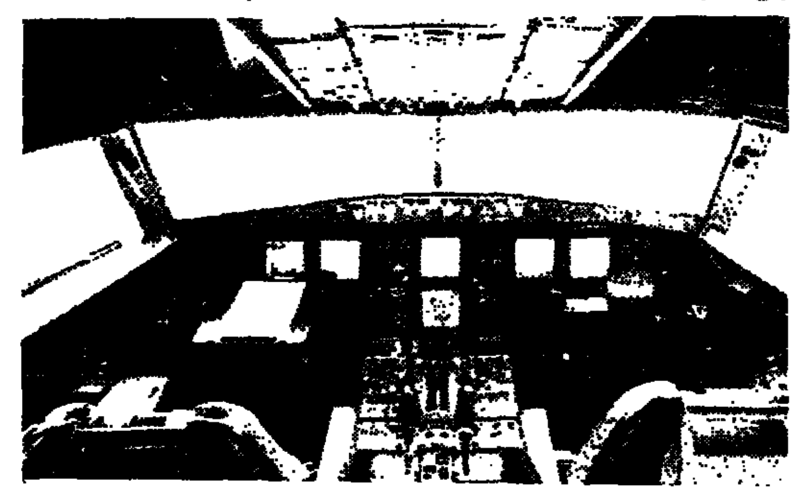
When the company that makes two out of every three jet airliners says baldly that there could be a big air crash once a week by 2010, it is time to start worrying: Boeing has no commercial interest in exaggerating the threat that hangs over aviation. But Boeing's bleak forecast has been echoed by others, including the head of America's Federal Aviation Administration. The steady improvement in airline safety is about to come to an end.

Last year was a particularly bad one for air disasters. It saw the ValuJet crash in a Florida swamp (killing 110), the explosion that blew flight TWA 800 out of the sky off Long island (killing 230) and a disastrous mid-air collision near New Delhi in India (killing 349). On average, a jet was written off every 9.8 days.

According to statistics collated by Airclaims, an aviation-insurance consultancy, there were 75 accidents that totally wrecked commercial aircraft (jets and small turboprops) in 1996, compared with an average of 66.2, during the 1980s. These figures include the former Soviet Union. Crashes of big jet airliners — the kind nervous flyers have nightmares about — have risen from an average of 20.6 a year in the 1980s to 25 last year in the West, and from six a year in the 1980s to 12 in 1996 in the former Soviet Union.

That pushes up the fatality figures. The total number of deaths rose by 73% to 1,597 last year, compared with 924 in 1995 and an average of 1,136 through the 1980s. Airclaims suggests that "we may now be seeing the early stages of a gradual increase in the annual number of total losses, with the average for the 1990s being generally some 10% up on the late 1970s and the 1980s."

Before canceling their next trip, nervous passengers ought to bear in mind that a rise in the absolute number of fatal crashes is not surprising, given that air travel has risen eight-fold since the 1960s. Moreover, last year's big crashes have to be seen in the context of 12,000 jet airliners in the sky, making over 15 million flights and carrying about 1.3 billion passengers every year. The overall accident rate per trip has fallen, from 50 in a million today; the accident rate per kilometer flown is also lower than it was 20 years ago.



But there is still a worry. These accident rates, which fell dramatically in the 1960s and early 1970s, have barely budged in the past ten years. Since air travel is growing by around 6% a year, simple arithmetic suggests that the absolute number of crashes is bound to rise. That will certainly frighten travelers, and may check the growth in air travel. "There is no point in telling the people how remarkably safe air transport is if they see television film or read of a major crash somewhere in the world at the rate of one a week," says Pierre Jeanniot, director of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

When the company that makes two out of every three jet airliners says baldly that there could be a big air crash once a week by 2010, it is time to start worrying

Travelers already react to what little information they are given on air safety: witness the way that American passengers deserted cheap no-frills airlines in the wake of the ValuJet disaster. They have gradually returned (thanks partly to reassuring changes in procedures by the airlines). But ValuJet's planes are barely half full — against an industry average of around 70%. As the number of crashes increases, travelers may look harder at the statistics.

Airlines and aircraft companies like to claim that commercial aviation is one of the safest ways to travel. That is absolutely right, if safety is measured in terms of deaths per distance traveled. By this measure, one British study shows that flying is 176 times safer than walking, almost 15 times safer than traveling by car and about 300 times safer than riding a motorbike.

However, the figures are skewed by the huge distances covered safely by air travel. Thanks to the reliability of airframes and of modern jet engines (which have fewer moving part to go wrong than did the old piston engines), accidents rarely happen during cruising. But 68% of accidents happen on take-off or landing, even though these operations occupy about 6% of flight time. Recalculate the figures per number of trips, and cars look 12 times safer than aero-planes, and only motorbikes look more dangerous. Even the more neutral measure of the fatality rate per man-hour of exposure puts cars and aircraft on a par.

How Not to Crash

Different aircraft have different safety records. All the same, the awful prospect of one big crash a week is galvanizing air-safety regulators and the aviation industry into action. There are three main ways to make the numbers look better: find new and safer technologies: raise safety standards in the airlines of developing countries and the former Soviet Union; and improve the training of pilots.

The steep fall in the airline accident rate since the 1960s has been due mainly to the development of the jet engine. No such dramatic technical fixes are now on the horizon, although there are a few advances that will help. For instance, satellite mapping of the earth's surface (mostly for military purposes) means that all new aircraft may soon be fitted with software that will tell a pilot if he is heading for a high mountain, and perhaps climb over the obstacle automatically. Satellite positioning systems will also improve air-traffic control.

Improving the safety of the world's most unsafe airlines is harder. American and European regulators moan about the low standards that tend to prevail in South America, Africa, the former Soviet Union and China. Indeed, the British Foreign Office recently advised Her Majesty's subjects not to take internal flights in Russia. Germany has been considering banning some foreign airlines from picking up passengers in Germany since a Turkish airliner, leased to a Dominican company, crashed last year in the Dominican Republic, killing 189 mainly German holidaymakers.

The trouble is that the standards agreed under the international air safety regime established by the 1944 Chicago Convention are too vague and feeble for today's crowded skies. For instance, they stipulate that airlines should limit the number of hours pilots can fly — but not whether the limit should be ten or 23 hours out of every 24. Most western countries have local standards much higher than those set by the Chicago rules.

Those rules allow countries to interfere in another country's airline-safety standards only when they have evident reasons to be anxious. That allows intervention when dangerous airlines fly into relatively safe countries. America's Federal Aviation Administration robustly bans foreign airlines from flying into the United States unless they let the FAA supervise them.

The trouble is that the standards agreed under the international air safety regime established by the 1944 Chicago Convention are too vague and feeble for today's crowded skies.

The third route to safety is to improve pilot training. Airlines now realize that they must give more intensive training to pilots who switch to automated cockpits.

Indeed, for a time in the late 1980s it looked as though technology was causing more accidents than it prevented because of muddles over whether the pilot or the computerized flight-management system ("fly-by-wire") was in control. An international study, led by the FAA, concluded last autumn that there had been 24 accidents or serious incidents caused by such problems.

Since pilot error is reckoned to play a part in about 70% of accidents, more attention is being paid to training. "The best pilots are no longer the traditional macho guys with the best bodily motor skills," says Michael Willett, safety director at the Civil Aviation Authority in Britain. "They are now those with the best information-management skills to work with digital cockpits." At present, pilot training and testing rightly concentrates on reducing errors: pilots are tested on their ability to fly with no mistakes, following correct procedures. But to achieve a further reduction in accidents pilots also need to be tested on their ability to overcome the consequences of the inevitable human errors.

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Until now, the emphasis of air safety has been reactive. If an aircraft crashes, a painstaking investigation attempts to pinpoint the cause and the regulators then order changes to the design of an aircraft or to the way it is flown or maintained. Now there is an attempt to apply "quality management" techniques, as used in other industries, in air safety. International data on safety problems, near-misses and accidents are being pooled. IATA's Mr. Jeanniot wants his member airlines to aim to halve the accident rate over the next ten years by, for instance, bringing in outsiders to audit their safety-management procedures. Perhaps when such steps are taken, aviation will get closer to its goal of zero accidents.

(Courtesy The Economist)

People Stranded on Ice

TORONTO -- Nearly 100 people -- most of them fishermen -- remained trapped on an ice floe in a Canadian lake Saturday after a large fissure suddenly appeared, Canadian armed forces sources said.

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But rescue operations were halted by strong gusts of wind and heavy snow on the lake, 60 kilometers (37.5 miles) north of Toronto.

(AFP)

Tiny Emirate to Build Major Tourist Resort

ABU DHABI — A tiny Persian Gulf emirate is planning to build a fun city and other tourist facilities in a drive to attract more visitors and develop its economy, the emirate said recently.

The project in Ajman, to cost around two billion dirhams ($544 million), includes a hotel, apartments, a fun city, parks, and shops, said Sheikh Ammar ibn Humaid al-Nuaimai, the crown prince of the emirate.

"We have received bids from international companies for the project. It will be financed jointly by the government and the private sector and some firms have already showed interest," he told *Al-Khaleej* newspaper.

Ajman, which has no oil, is one of the smallest members of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with a population of around 50,000 and gross domestic product of nearly two billion dirhams ($544 million) in 1995.

Sheikh Ammar said Ajman had rejected offers by international firms to build an oil refinery in the northern emirate because "it is a small emirate and we do not want projects that will affect its environment."

(AFP)

Two Boys Killed by Father

BREDA, Netherlands — Two boys, aged seven and nine, were killed in woods near this town in the southern Netherlands by their 43-year-old father, who then shot himself, local police said recently.

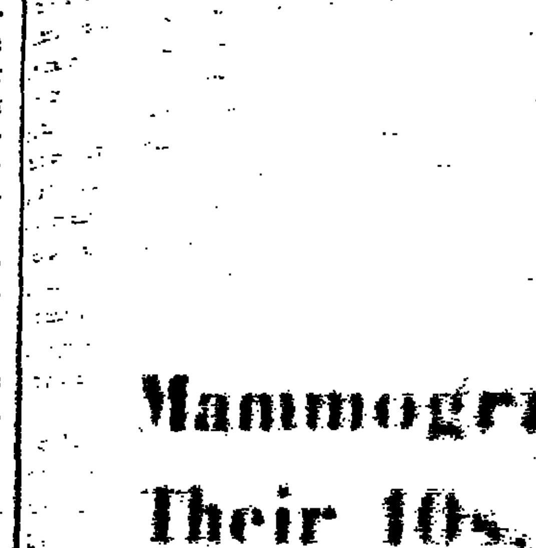
A passerby made the macabre discovery on Friday evening, after finding the man's abandoned car.

Police spokesman Henk Ketelaar said the man, who had divorced three years ago, had picked up his sons from his former wife a few hours before the tragedy, exercising his visiting rights.

It was the second incidence of infanticide this year in the Netherlands.

On January 15 three children aged seven, eight and nine, were found dead in their beds in Hoofddorp, in the west of the country. Their parents confessed the following day to having killed them. The couple, who were admitted to hospital with serious knife wounds, had apparently never recovered from the death of their eldest son from leukaemia in 1995.

(AFP)











Heart
Titanium blood pump

Our Brains as Big as They'll Get

LONDON — Science-fiction films that depict our descendants as big-brained geniuses are off the mark, British scientists said recently — they say our brains are as big as they can be.

Chris Winter and fellow researchers at British telecommunications PLC's BT laboratories say the brain has just about reached top capacity. At best, it is within 20 percent of the maximum, they told *New Scientist* magazine.

The human brain — and those of other higher mammals — packs a lot of power into a small area because of the convoluted way it folds up inside the skull.

Human brains are about three times the size of that of our nearest relative — the chimpanzee. Dolphins and whales have brains of comparable size to ours.

Scientists say the human skull could not grow any bigger because, as any mother can attest, it is already almost too big to go through the birth canal. This is one reason human babies are born so early and helpless — any later and their heads would be too big.

Winter's group examined different ways the brain could possibly evolve to be even bigger without taking up more space.

They found that to produce more power, the axons of nerve cells — the parts that stretch from one cell to another — would have to grow wider to carry the extra signals.

They would have to carry more insulation in that case, as well as more blood, which would take up a lot of space. The space is simply not there, BT found.

Winter's group also noted that the brain is now designed to be as efficient as possible. It uses chemical signals to pass information about and if the brain got any larger it would inevitably slow this process down.

There is no incremental improvement path available to the brain, which makes evolution difficult, Winter said.

But that does not mean that people cannot evolve to be smarter. Scientists estimate we only use a small percentage of the brain power available to us and say brain size is a poor indicator of intelligence.

(Reuter)

Researchers Fight Cancer Tumors With Blood Clots

WASHINGTON — Scientists reported recently they have managed to wipe out cancer in some laboratory mice by creating blood clots that cause miniature strokes that kill the tumour.

The experiments, reported in the recent edition of the *Journal Science*, have had encouraging results in mice, eliminating nearly 4 in 10 tumors within hours and shrinking many of the other cancers.

But the scientists caution there are still significant hurdles to overcome before the technique can be tried in people.

When cancer tumors form, new blood vessels develop to nourish them. In addition to allowing the tumor to grow and thrive, these vessels can also carry cancer cells to other parts of the body, where they can spread the disease.

The team led by Dr. Philip Thorpe, a prominent cancer researcher at the University of Texas southwestern medical centre in Dallas developed an antibody that can head directly to these new blood vessels and deliver a clotting factor.

We attack the tumor blood vessels themselves and kill them, said co-author Steven King, a molecular biologist at Peregrine pharmaceuticals, which Thorpe founded in Princeton, New Jersey. King said the antibody the team developed can tell the difference between newly formed blood vessels and established ones in the body.

While Thorpe's team has worked on attacking the blood vessels, other scientists have been trying to prevent them from forming in tumors in the first place, and one group reported some signifant advances in the *Journal Cell*.

Dr. Michael O'reilly and other researchers at children's hospital in Boston said they had found that a protein in blood cells, called endostatin, can inhibit the growth of new blood vessels and shrink a tumor in mice.

O'reilly said endostatin appears to be the most potent of a number of inhibitors discovered to date. Although it has not yet been tried in humans, a 30-day study found that a variety of mouse tumors treated with endostatin shrunk to microscopic dormant lesions.

In Thorpe's blood clot approach, the researchers have so far identified only a mouse version of the antibody. But they are working on a human equivalent and hope to start trials within about 18 months, said Lon Stone, CEO of Techniclone International, in Tustin, California, which has announced plans to acquire peregrine.

It's a lot of work but it's 99.9 percent doable, Stone said by telephone, adding that he hopes the research will lead to humane therapies with few side effects that can defeat such solid tumors as lung, colon and breast cancer.

Thorpe told a telephone conference call with reporters later that Techniclone's mission is to develop drugs for the treatment of all the major solid types of cancer.

Scientists who have seen the research say it is very exciting, although they caution that approaches that seem promising in lab animals do not always work in humans.

This probably is a viable therapeutic option, National Cancer Institute researcher Dr. James Pluda said.

King said the tumor was completely eradicated in 38 percent of the mice and the mice stayed cancer-free for the four months they were followed. You can see within a half hour in mice, the tumor itself becomes black. It (the treatment) shut off the blood supply and coagulated it.

In the next four to 24 hours, the tumor started to die and break down and the body began clearing the dead tumor mass.

In the rest of the cases, tumors shrank but did not totally disappear as a remaining layer of cells were able to survive off the normal blood vessels near the tumor. But King said those smaller masses, reachable by the regular blood supply, should be good targets for chemotherapy or other more traditional treatment.

Techniclone is also developing a tumor necrosis therapy that would use a monoclonal antibody to carry toxic substances such as radioisotopes into the core of a tumor and kill it from the inside out. Stone said this approach could eventually be a follow-up to the blood clotting approach, delivering a one-two punch to tumors. *(Reuter)*

Mammograms for Women in Their 40s, Matter of Choice

WASHINGTON — Annual mammograms for women in their 40s are a matter or choice since there is insufficient scientific evidence that they reduce breast cancer for all women in that group, a panel of experts said.

Screening for breast cancer, however, does reduce the mortality rate from breast cancer in women between 50 and 69, the experts told a meeting convened by the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, near Washington.

"The available data do not warrant a single recommendation for mammography for all women in their 40s. Each woman should decide for herself whether to undergo mammography," the panel said in a statement issued thursday at the start of the meeting.

Far from ending the decade-long debate over screening for breast cancer, the experts' findings were challenged by the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society.

Institute director Richard Klausner said five recent studies in Sweden indicate that women who regularly undergo mammograms in their 40s suffered 20 to 30 percent fewer cancer deaths than women who were not screened.

"The data supporting the benefit of screening women in their 40s is stronger than it had been," Klausner said. "Women need to know that."

He said he would take the panel's report to the National Cancer Advisory Board and ask that it reconsider the mammogram issue when it next meets February 24.

The eight women and five men on the so-called "Consensus Development Panel" reviewed more than 130 scientific studies and listened to speakers on both sides of the issue. Eight of the panel members are doctors.

While breast cancer is the leading cause of death among women in their 40s, a women at 40 has a two percent chance of being diagnosed with the disease by the time she is 50, and a three-in-1,000 chance of dying from it.

(AFP)

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N1	O1	F4	S1	I1	I1	S1	4th Letter Triple	RACK 1
H4	Y4	I1	I1	M3	T1	G2	Double Word Score	RACK 2
G2	I1	O1	E1	I1	B3	L1		RACK 3
T1	S1	R1	E1	E1	S1	E1		RACK 4

PAR SCORE 65-75

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7- letter word from the letters in each row. To total points of your words, use scoring directions to right of each row. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words can be found in OSW Official Scrabble Words (Chambers). JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

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Here is the solution to yesterday's Scrabble

SCRABBLE® BRAND GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD
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B3	U1	B3	B3	L1	Y4		RACK 1 =	15
E1	X8	P3	E1	C3	T1	S1	RACK 2 =	68
F4	O1	O1	T1	P3	A1	D2	RACK 3 =	89
L1	I1	F4	T1	E1	D2		RACK 4 =	10
							JUDD'S TOTAL	182

PAR SCORE 115-125

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THOUGHT

He who despises himself esteems himself as a self-despiser.

Anonymous

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PRAYER

Noon.......................12:17
Evening....................17:48
Dawn (tomorrow)............5:32
Sunrise (tomorrow)...........7:07

TODAY IN HISTORY

1695 - Mustafa II succeeds as Sultan of Turkey on death of Ahmad II.

1822 - Greek indepedence is proclaimed formally.

1865 - Treaty betwee Spain and Peru virtally recognizes Peru's independence.

1900 - The first chemical drug is made by a German Chemist.

1945 - Warsaw, capital of Poland is invaded by Russian forces during the conflicts between Soviet Red Army and German Nazi troops.

1967 - Three U.S. Apollo astronauts die in flash fire aboard space capsule. United Steates, Soviet Union and 60 other nations sign treaty to limit military activities in outer space.

1993 - Police in New Delhi lob tear gas shells to disperse rioting mobs of Hindus and Muslims who attack a mosque and a temple and burned down dozens of shops.

Too Much Fruit Juice Bad for Children

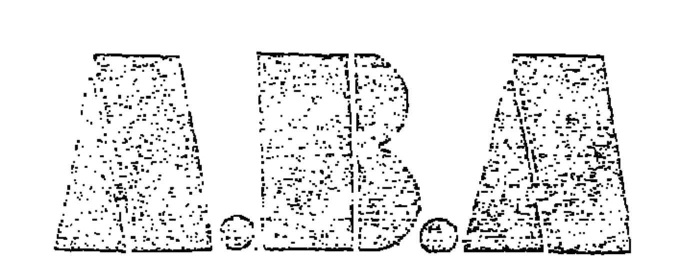
WASHINGTON — Children who drink more than 360 milliliters (12 fluid ounces) of fruit juice a day can have problems with obesity or stunted growth, says a study published this week in the U.S. magazine *Pediatrics*.

The study, conducted over a two-year period on two groups of children between two and five years old, shows that those who drank a minimum 360 milliliters of fruit juice a day had a weight-height ratio of 18.4 kilograms per three meters (40.5 pounds per 9.9 feet) compared to the 16.8 kilograms per three meters (36.9 pounds per 9.9 feet) of those who drank less than that amount.

Children who drank a lot of fruit juice also tended to stay small — 86.5 centimeters (34.6 inches) compared to 89.3 centimeters (35.7 inches) for two-year-olds, and 1.06 meters (3.5 feet) compared to 1.11 meters (3.7 feet) for the children between three and five, the study says.

The study, written by a group of researchers led by Barbara Dennison of Columbia University in New York, stresses that "our findings ... need to be replicated in additional populations of children."

Nevertheless, it advises, "until other studies prove otherwise, it seems prudent for parents and care takers to limit young children's consumption of fruit juice to less than 12 fluid ounces a day." *(AFP)*



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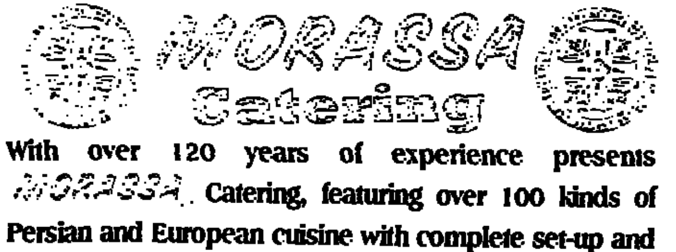
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Analysts Expect More Yeltsin Engagements to Be Put Off

MOSCOW — Analysts expect more of Russian President Boris Yeltsin's engagements to be put off, including meetings with European leaders next month, as he struggles to recover from his health problems.

The Commonwealth of Independent States, the loose grouping of 12 ex-Soviet republics, postponed its planned summit for a second time Friday as the Kremlin said President Boris Yeltsin was not yet ready to go back to work.

Officially, CIS Secretary Ivan Korochenya said the proposal to postpone the summit came from the leaders of Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

More time was needed to bring "new integration initiatives" between Russia and Belarus into line with CIS documents for development, he said.

But an informed source in the Belarus capital of Minsk said that in fact the move for postponement had come from the Kremlin.

The summit, due to be chaired by Yeltsin, was originally set for January 17. However, it was then put back to January 29, as Yeltsin was confined to hospital suffering from double pneumonia. No new date was set Friday.

Yeltsin was admitted to hospital on January 8, just two months after undergoing a quintuple heart bypass operation, and was only discharged on Monday.

Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said Yeltsin was still recovering at his Gorky-9 residence just outside Moscow Friday, and was not yet ready physically to resume work.

He told reporters he had spoken to Yeltsin on Wednesday, when the Russian leader spent about three hours at the Kremlin.

"I had the impression that the president still had not fully recovered from his illness, and physically he is not yet ready" to return to work, the spokesman said.

"I must stress that one should not expect a hasty return of the president to the Kremlin, to resume a full workload. His appearance in the Kremlin on Wednesday does not contradict that information," he said.

Yastrzhembsky insisted that Yeltsin's future engagements still stood, including talks with French President Jacques Chirac in Moscow on February 2 and a summit with European leaders in The Hague two days later.

But analysts were extremely skeptical.

"Of course Mr. Yeltsin will not be able to attend the CIS Summit, any more than he will be able to welcome Mr. Chirac or go to Holland," said Andrei Piontkowski of the Moscow Center for Strategic Studies.

"These are just idiocies, it's a farce," Piontkowski added. "It is obvious that he is in very poor condition and in no state to resume his duties." No television footage of Yeltsin has been shown since his latest bout in hospital, and he has spent most of the past seven months away from the public eye, in hospital or various rest homes.

Analysts also pointed to the announcement that Yeltsin had signed a decree appointing a foreign policy council, to include himself, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin and intelligence chiefs.

He has set up a number of similar councils to deal with domestic issues, but this is the first body to handle foreign affairs, a domain which Yeltsin had always jealously guarded for himself.

"If my advice were sought, I would suggest that the president hand over his powers temporarily to Mr. Chernomyrdin, as the constitution allows, and that he take the two or three months off that he needs to rest," Piontkowski said.

"That would avoid panic," he added.

The constitution, drawn up by Yeltsin himself, offers little guidance on what to do in such cases of repeated absence by the president, and some politicians are beginning to speak out in favor of a reform of the basic law.

Opposition deputies in the Lower House of Parliament, the State Duma, launched a bid to impeach Yeltsin on grounds of ill health, but their draft resolution was turned down.

Legal experts at the Duma and constitutional court said the resolution, even if adopted, would have had no legal value.

The constitution says impeachment proceedings can only be launched in the case of "treason or another serious crime," and it is vague on the question of "incapacity" of the president.

Nevertheless, deputies agreed to use the resolution as a basis for further debate, and they plan to raise the matter again next month.

Yastrzhembsky said Yeltsin "still has a burning desire to return to work as soon as possible, and he still has a very strong political will to do that."

(AFP)



GROZNY, Chechenya, Russian Federation (Jan.24): Presidential candidate Zlimkhan Yandarbyev offers Muslim prayers during his visit to Znamenskoye village outside Grozny. Presidential and Parliament elections in Chechnya are scheduled to be held January 27.

(AFP PHOTO)

Sinn Fein Leader Adams to Contest British Polls

BELFST — The IRA's political arm Sinn Fein said its leader Gerry Adams and chief negotiator Martin McGuinness would contest Northern Ireland seats in this year's British general election.

Sinn Fein said that if elected, its representatives would boycott the British Parliament, in line with a long-standing policy adopted to protest against Britain's rule over Northern Ireland.

McGuinness said that if Sinn Fein candidates were elected, it would push the government to come up with new ways of ending the protracted conflict in the region.

It will be a world news story if Sinn Fein return a strong number of candidates in this election, he said in London.

It would put increasing pressure on an incoming British government to put together a new initiative.

Sinn Fein President Adams said the election might end a deadlock that has seen a recent surge in guerrilla activity in the troubled province. The opposition Labour Party holds a commanding lead over the ruling Conservatives.

Adams said in a statement that Prime Minister John Major had already signalled that he would do nothing to advance the Northern Ireland peace process until after the general election.

Major insists the IRA must call off its war on British rule before Sinn Fein is given a seat at multi-party talks which have made slow headway since their launch in Belfast last June.

People have a sense that there will be a new government, a new prime minister and a new scenario and that in that context a new opportunity to rebuild the peace process, a Sinn Fein source told Reuters.

The Northern Ireland peace process has floundered since last February when the IRA ended a 17 month cease-fire and launched a British Mainland bombing campaign.

Sinn Fein said Adams would contest the seat of west Belfast, for long the cockpit of the IRA's armed campaign against British security forces.

Adams won the seat in 1983, a major breakthrough for his policy of ballot and bullet combining electoral gains with continued IRA activity. He was reelected as an absentee member in 1987, but was unseated by the moderate nationalist SDLP Party in 1992.

McGuinness, who is widely regarded as Adams's deputy, will stand in mid-Ulster in the rural heartland of Northern Ireland.

Gerry Kelly, a leading Republican and former convicted IRA guerrilla, will stand in north Belfast.

The province has 17 seats in the British Parliament, 13 of which are held by protestant unionists and four by the SDLP.

Given that the electoral boundaries have been redrawn and an extra constituency added, Catholic politicians believe they can win several further seats.

(Reuter)

Gibraltar Takes Spain Protest to EU

BRUSSELS — Anglo-Spanish tensions over Gibraltar are set to resurface in Brussels this week when a high-level delegation from the British colony arrives to lobby against Spain's obstruction of its full integration into the European Union.

The mission, led by Gibraltar's new Chief Minister Peter Caruana, has irked Spain, which sees it as a breach of the treaty of Rome, under which Britain is responsible for the colony's external relations.

The visit is officially under the auspices of Britain's representation in Brussels and British officials insisted the Spanish had no grounds for complaint.

"Everything has been done in accordance with the proper procedures," one said. "Things would not be any different if the leader of Edinburgh District Council was visiting Brussels." Spanish sensitivity though has clearly made itself felt in the corridors of the European Commission.

None of the four commissioners that Caruana originally planned to see has been able to find the time to receive him during the four days he will spend here.

The chief minister will have to content himself with a courtesy call on Britain's Senior Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, who has responsibility for none of the issues that Gibraltar wants to raise.

The commission's snub follows a diplomatic row in November when Spain lodged an unprecedented diplomatic protest with the commission after Judicial Affairs Commissioner Anita Gradin visited the colony on a fact-finding mission without giving Madrid advance notice.

Caruana's visit to Brussels is aimed at increasing awareness of what the Gibraltar authorities see as Spanish attempts to make life as difficult as possible for the rock's 30,000 inhabitants.

These include a refusal to accept Gibraltar identity cards, which are recognized by every other EU state, and the nonrecognition of the territory's international telephone code.

There have also been fears that Spain would stop recognizing British passports issued in Gibraltar but these have receded after assurances delivered by Madrid last week.

Gibraltar also accuses Spain of stifling its economic development by blocking the application of EU legislation liberalizing regional air traffic to the territory. In practice this means that all flights to the territory must go via London.

Spain justifies its stance on the grounds that Gibraltar has rejected its request for the airport to be put under joint Spanish-Gibraltarian control and policing.

The airport is a particularly sensitive issue because it is built on land which is not covered by the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, under which Britain gained sovereignty of Gibraltar.

Spain also accuses the Gibraltarian authorities of turning a blind eye to the smuggling of drugs and tobacco into Spain and money-laundering among the 52,000 companies registered in the colony.

Police seizures of narcotics in the area around Gibraltar rose from eight tons in 1992 to 34 tons in 1994, while tobacco smuggling is estimated to have cost the Spanish treasury 84 billion pesetas ($610 million) in lost taxes between 1989 and 1994.

As tobacco imported into Gibraltar is taxed at 20 percent of its value, Spain argues that it is effectively financing the territory's government.

Under the Treaty of Rome, Gibraltar is part of the European Union. But it is not fully integrated into the single market and is excluded from common fisheries and agriculture policies.

It also has no direct representation in the European Parliament.

(AFP)

Cartologists and Geographers Refuse to Recognize "Dzokhar-Ghala"

MOSCOW — Russian federal cartologists and geographers say they will refuse to recognize the renaming of the Chechen capital in honor of the late Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

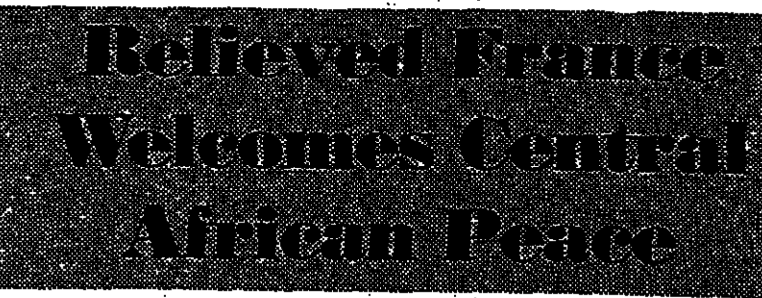
They said the Russian constitution states that renaming all geographical objectives is up federal authorities only.

Chechnya's current leader, Zemlikhan Yandarbiev, announced that Grozny was being renamed Dzhokar-Ghala, or "Dzhokarville" at a rally in the Chechen capital.

Until a new law can be adopted on the renaming of geographic objectives, it is the responsibility of the Russian president to authorize any renaming. No such order been signed regarding the Chechen capital, TASS said, because the city's inhabitants have not notified the president that they wish the capital to be renamed.

A law on the renaming of geographic objectives is due to be considered by the Duma, the Lower House of the Russian Parliament, next month.

(AFP)



PARIS — France, whose soldiers acted as a buffer in strife in the capital Bangui, welcomed a peace deal to end an army mutiny and ethnic bloodshed in the Central African republic.

A Foreign Ministry statement hailed mediator Amadou Toumani Toure, a former Malian president, for his perseverance and paid tribute to the presidents of Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mali who launched peace efforts after a Franco-African summit in Ouagadougou last month.

(France) urges the parties to scrupulously abide by their commitments. .. It urges them to continue on the path to national concord, which is the only basis for efforts towards economic recovery, it said.

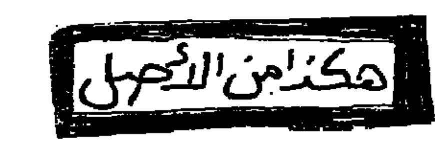
The ministry said it counted on an international committee and peacekeeping force to make sure the agreement is implemented.

Mutinies in April and May began over pay and conditions but turned into a campaign to oust elected President Ange Patasse and degenerated into ethnic feuding.

A 500-strong African peacekeeping force, including soldiers from Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal and Togo, is to deploy soon to supervise implementation of the peace deal.

The peacekeepers will replace troops from former colonial power France, who have been acting as a buffer between the mutineers and bitter rivals in the presidential guard. Two French soldiers were among those killed in the latest revolt.

(Reuter)



Anti-Skin Cancer Groups Battle Bronzed Aussie Image

ADELAIDE -- Australian health authorities, tackling the world's highest rates of skin cancer, have launched a graphic advertising campaign to ram home the dangers of sunburn.

Lapping up the sun on Australia's endless beaches has fallen from favor in the past decade, with anti-cancer groups trying to fade out the appeal of the famous bronzed Aussie look.

But the groups are concerned their message to cover up with hats, sunscreens and protective clothing is being forgotten, particularly by teenagers -- and especially young men.

Australian anti-cancer councils say teenagers tend to feel they are invincible and research in Queensland, the northern state with the worst skin cancer rates, shows that while they understand the risks well they are less likely than other groups to change their behavior.

About 75 percent of all Australians will have at least one skin cancer cut off in their lifetime, said anti-cancer council of Victoria director Professor Robert Burton.

And about 750,000 people will have something cut off their skin which could be a skin cancer this year -- that is way above other countries, he said.

The latest television advertisement, which shows a skin lesion being cut off a young person's face, follows a survey that found nearly 40 percent of people in Victoria, Australia's second most populous state, suffered sunburn last summer.

It is designed to be more confrontational than previous lifestyle campaigns that featured a cartoon seagull mascot.

"Young people have told us they do not want a pussyfooting approach, they want to be told the cold, hard facts," said Queensland council director Graeme Brien said.

Research has shown a direct link between sunburn and the incidence of skin cancer, by far the most prevalent form of cancer amongst Australia's 18 million population.

Treating skin cancers will cost the nation's health care system about A$150 million (U.S.$120 million) in 1997, about double the costs of lung cancer, the anti-cancer council of Victoria estimates.

Australians were still suffering the effects of poor sun behavior in past decades, with the incidence of the deadliest form of skin cancer, melanoma, doubling over two decades to 8,000 cases in 1993/94, the most recent figures.

Lapping up the sun on Australia's endless beaches has fallen from favor in the past decade, with anti-cancer groups trying to fade out the appeal of the famous bronzed Aussie look.

Specialists attribute Australia's high incidence of skin cancers to the former fashion for its people, many from a fair-skinned, Anglo-Celtic background, to soak up the sun in pursuit of a dark tan.

Since alarm about skin cancer was triggered in the 1980s, Australians have been urged to abandon the bronzed look in promotions that have aimed at a cultural shift.

The council says its campaign has been very effective, particularly with schools and parents of young children, many of whom now romp on beaches in Lycra neck-to-knee bathing suits.

Young women too, aware of the effect on their looks of prematurely aged skin, have taken the message to heart.

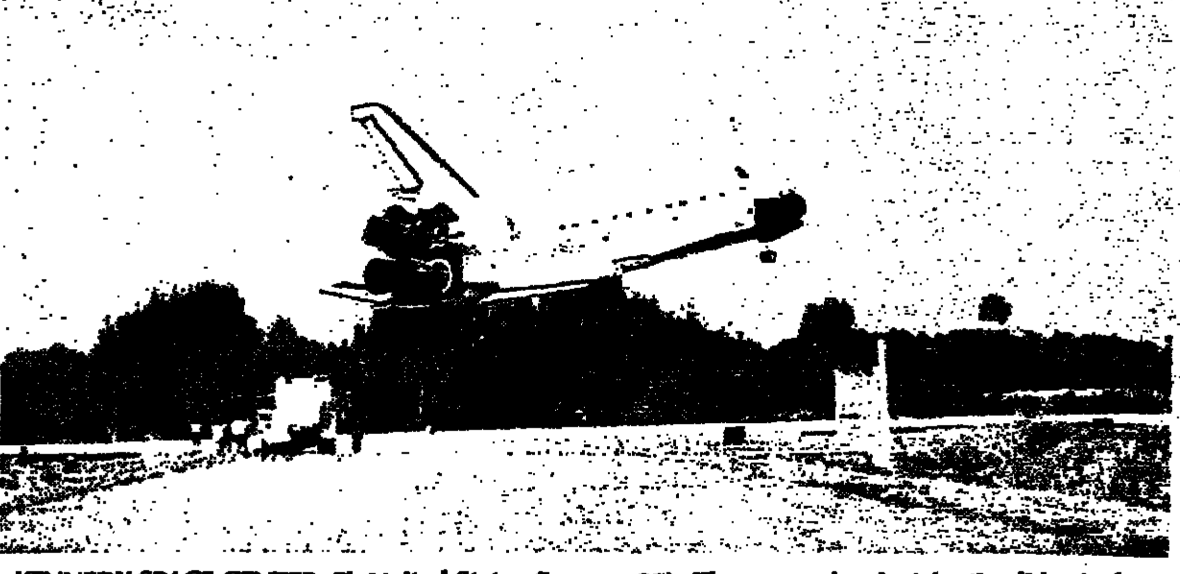
Illustrating the trend, women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* has adopted the anti-skin cancer promotion as policy and editor Mia Freedman said it no longer used darkly tanned models.

"The result has been that our eye has changed: whereas 10 years ago a deep dark tan looked sexy and Australian and modern, now it looks very old fashioned and unAustralian," she said.

Citing pale-skinned actors like Judy Davis and Nicole Kidman as the new-breed of Australian beauties, she told Reuters: "There is no such thing as a suntan, it is all sun-damage now."

Burton said Australians were still suffering the effects of poor sun behavior in past decades, with the incidence of the deadliest form of skin cancer, melanoma, doubling over two decades to 8,000 cases in 1993/94, the most recent figures.

But cancer specialists were buoyed by recent evidence that the incidence of all skin cancers was beginning to level off, while the death rate from melanoma in women was falling and had slowed in men after a steady climb for 30 years. (Reuter)



KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, Fl, United States (January 22): The space shuttle Atlantis glides in for a landing at Kennedy Space Center in Florida after a ten-day mission in space. The Atlantis and her crew were docked with the Russian space station Mir for five days retrieving U.S. astronaut John Blaha and returning him to Earth after a 118-day stay on the Mir. (AFP PHOTO)

Commission to Be Given One Year to Right "Mad Cow" Mistakes

BRUSSELS -- The European Parliament is set to pass a conditional vote of no-confidence in the European Commission over its handling of "mad cow" disease, giving the EU executive a year to put its house in order.

A resolution to be presented to the assembly next month will call for a vote of censure by the end of 1997 if the commission fails to implement reforms to prevent a repeat of the mistakes highlighted in a report drawn up by a special parliamentary committee of inquiry.

A resolution to be presented to the assembly next month will call for a vote of censure by the end of 1997 if the commission fails to implement reforms to prevent a repeat of the mistakes highlighted in a report drawn up by a special parliamentary committee of inquiry.

The conditional censure -- first proposed by Green MPs -- now looks certain to carry the day after the influential chair of the committee, the German Christian Democrat Reimer Boege, revealed that he would be backing this option.

"We want to give the commission time to make things better but we also have to underline how serious we are," he said.

Boege's committee, which held a series of hearings over a six-month period, uncovered strong evidence that the commission put its concern to avoid a beef market collapse before its duty to protect consumers in the EU's single market.

Its final report accuses Brussels officials of systematically playing down the risk to human health posed by mad cow disease in cattle and of failing to use their powers to verify independently that Britain was applying agreed measures to control the disease.

In particular the commission's failure to send inspectors to British farms and abattoirs between June 1990 and May 1994 -- when the disease was at its peak -- was severely criticized.

At the same time, the report makes it clear that primary responsibility for the spread of the disease in Britain, the resulting EU ban on beef exports and the slump in consumption across Europe, lies with the British government.

London is accused of failing to ensure that British farmers obeyed a 1989 ban on the use of ground-up animal carcasses in cattle feed, for allowing exports of the contaminated feed to continue into the 1990s and for ignoring scientific advice which dissented from the majority view -- now discredited -- that the disease could not pass to humans.

Successive commissioners of agriculture nevertheless had to bear a "political responsibility" for allowing Britain to get away with this, the report concluded.

Commission President Jacques Santer has already reacted to the committee's findings, promising a shake-up under which responsibility for both the provision of scientific advice on food safety issues and veterinary inspections will be transferred from the commission's powerful Agriculture Directorate to its Consumer Protection Department.

The commission proposed last May the establishment of an independent veterinary inspection agency but this has so far been rejected by EU governments.

Santer has pledged a new attempt to persuade member states to change their minds. Failing this, veterinary inspection will be put under the control of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Emma Bonino and the case for an increase in resources examined.

Commission officials were sanguine about the threat of a censure, which would force the 20-member executive to resign collectively. "The Parliament would be cutting its own throat," one said. "The member states would simply reappoint the same commission the next day." (AFP)

Russians Turn to the Past in Search of New Values

"Russia has lost the notion of its identity and we can take Orthodox Christianity as a base and adapt it to modern society."

MOSCOW -- Russian nationalists are pushing for a return to the Orthodox Christian values of tsarist Russia to fill the ideological void left by the collapse of communism.

Last week -- the anniversary of the death of Lenin -- the black robes of Orthodox priests mingled with blue uniforms of police cadets at the Interior Ministry Academy for a debate on "a new national ideology for Russia".

The debate was organized by film director Nikita Mikhalkov, of international renown, who proposed restoring the creed of the tsarist era based on: "Orthodox Christianity, autocracy and the genius of the people".

Only recently, the Russian press carried reports of a possible return to Russia of the Romanovs, the family of Nicholas II, the last tsar who was murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918 along with his wife and children.

The reports said the return would be a symbolic rehabilitation of the Romanovs but would have no effect on Russia's political institutions.

However the reports came amid months of soul-searching about how to restore a sense of national pride and identity to Russians still traumatized by the break-up of the Soviet empire.

Rumor has it that Russian personalities hold regular meetings in one of the secondary homes of President Boris Yeltsin to try to define a new national ideology.

"In the old days, they used to tell us 'God does not exist but Lenin exists and we are all moving towards a radiant future'," said Father Yevgeny, the director of the Moscow Religious Academy.

"Today they still tell us God does not exist and we are all going to die. Grab everything you can lay your hands on and get out, we are told."

In the view of Mikhalkov "there can be no new national ideology outside of Orthodox church teaching which should be made a compulsory subject in schools."

Alexander Burkin, the leader of the "Russian Orthodoxy" movement, suggested that one way to "bring the man in the street back to real values" would be to restore in all villages the traditional "troika"; an authority composed of the local administrator, the police chief and the Orthodox priest.

The priest could take part in local affairs by "consecrating the village lake" or by "blessing the work in the fields". "He could accompany the police chief to the scene of a crime and purify it with holy water," Burkin told the audience.

However Mikhalov said the authorities should beware of being over-zealous in promoting Orthodox teaching. "Making the sign of the cross could become as obligatory today, as going to Communist Party meetings was in the past," he warned.

"The Orthodox church must learn to defend itself and to distinguish between those who want the good of the country and those who are seeking to exploit it to gain power," Mikhalov said, in an apparent allusion to the extreme right.

The ultra-right leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky, ignoring the jibe, called on the Orthodox clergy to join in a "political offensive".

"We don't have time to build thousands of churches and to raise a new generation of priests.... but we can help you block laws in Parliament or amend others," he said.

Younger members of the audience appeared convinced of the need to regenerate Russian spiritual values. "Russia has lost the notion of its identity and we can take Orthodox Christianity as a base and adapt it to modern society," said Dmitri Filipov, a 19-year-old trainee policeman.

"If we can revive spiritual values, that can help reduce crime," said his class-mate Andrei Yazev, 18. (AFP)

Couple Arrested After Offering Children for Torture

ROSENHEIM, Germany -- A German couple has been arrested after offering children for torture and even murder via computer networks, police and legal officials said recently.

Investigators discovered a soundproof torture chamber at the house of the couple, a woman of 36 and a man of 30, who were arrested last week.

Police said they had no evidence to suggest that children had been tortured in the room, but said there were indications the couple had planned to bring children to the room by force.

Prosecutor Wolfgang Giese said it was possible the computer offers were simply the fruit of an "extreme imagination," but he said "We must suppose that the proposals had a basis in reality."

Police said a case of acts of sadism against an adult had already been established.

The couple, who used the pseudonyms "Sado Executioner" and "Domina Sorceress in Leather" used the Deutsche Telekom T-Online server and also, reportedly, the Internet to offer children kidnapped from Eastern Europe in particular, police said.

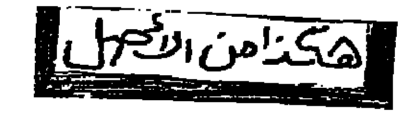
A user alerted police after he was offered a girl of between 10 and 14 for 12,000 German marks ($8,000) for "games without limits."

When he made telephone inquiries, the woman he spoke to said that the death of the victim would not be a problem and that for an extra 3,000 German marks, "we could easily make a body disappear."

T-Online said it only knew of the case through press reports.

"Neither the police nor the prosecutors office has contacted us," spokesman Joerg Lammers said. "That's why we think that the criminal offers were not made through any of T-Online's services."

However the network does allow dialogues within a limited circle that are not permanently monitored by the server, he said. (AFP)



UN Agency Holds Key 25th Anniversary Meeting



Zebras
(*Equus quagga*)

NAIROBI — The UN Environment Program (UNEP) opens its 19th governing council session on Monday, believed to be the most important in its 25-year history, a UNEP statement announced here.

The meeting comes ahead of the June special session of the UN General Assembly to review the progress of the global plan of action agreed at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The statement said ministers and high government representatives from over 100 countries were expected to attend the two-week meeting, which will culminate in a three-day "high-level" segment from February 5-7.

During the meeting, "governments will not only commemorate the 25th anniversary of UNEP, but will also have the opportunity and responsibility to set UNEP on a clear path for the next millenium," UNEP executive director Elizabeth Dowdeswell was quoted by the statement as saying.

The meeting is seen as pivotal for the future of many organizations involved in implementing sustainable development, including UNEP.

With the June meeting in mind, the high-level segment, to be opened by the UN General Assembly President Ambassador Razali on February 5, will focus on central policy issues.

These will include defining how UNEP will participate in the General Assembly special session through a "thoughtful and articulated" assessment of UNEP's role and mandate, and to review UNEP's structures to determine what changes might be necessary.

Ministers will be given a number of documents, including an appraisal of UNEP's efforts to implement the global action plan, the first edition of a biennial global environment outlook and a paper outlining the options for UNEP's future.

The first week of the governing council session will consider administrative and budgetary matters, as well as new substantive programs, including a chemical agenda, environmental law, and a global program of action to protect the marine environment from land-based activities.

Another key issue will be financing of UNEP, which is already witnessing shrinking resources at a time when its workload is increasing in response to serious environmental problems worldwide and to demands by countries.

Subsequently, a "pledging session" will be held on February 5, during which governments will be invited to announce their pledges for 1997 and for the coming biennial, 1998-1999. (AFP)



Arisaema
(*Arisaema nepenthoides*)

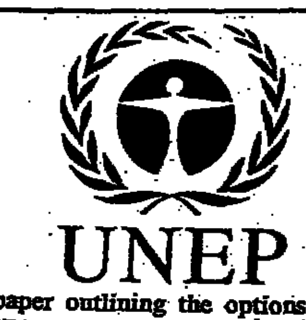


Water dragon
(*Physignathus cocincinus*)

Banana plant
(*Musha cavendishii*)



Water lily
(*Nuphar advena*)





Andean Cock of the Rock
(*Rupicola peruviana*)



African elephant
(*Loxodonta africana*)



Aloe
(*Aloe saponaria*)

Annan Visit Opened New Chapter in UN-U.S. Relations

UNITED NATIONS — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan opened a new chapter in the world body's relations with Washington on a three-day visit spent lobbying the U.S. administration and members of Congress.

But it remains to be seen whether the new goodwill will produce a cheque from the Republican-dominated Congress totalling $1.3 billion — the arrears owed to the United Nations which have been withheld pending the implementation of UN reforms.

Annan told AFP on the plane as he returned to New York late Friday that his trip had "turned the page" on U.S.-UN relations which had often been difficult under his predecessor Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Washington blocked the Egyptian from a second term as UN chief on the ground that he was foot-dragging on reform.

Steven Dimoff, the Washington representative of the nonprofit United Nations Association of the United States, which hosted a glittering reception for Annan, said that the UN chief "managed to set a very positive tone," an important factor in a city where image carries weight.

Annan, a Ghanaian who studied in Minnesota in the early 1960s, throughout his visit stressed his 30-year connections with the United States.

One observer noted that he passed over the fact that for roughly the same period he had worked at the United Nations, which could lead to questions about his ability to overhaul the organization, viewed by Congress as a bastion of inefficiency and waste.

UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said that Annan's reception, particularly in Congress, was "unexpectedly warm and enthusiastic." "With good faith and increased contact, we can only benefit," he added.

Annan secured a pledge from U.S. President Bill Clinton that he would propose to Congress paying off the arrears in his budget proposals, due to be presented on February 6, receiving in return a promise from the UN chief to press on with reform.

The chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, arch-Conservative Jesse Helms, meanwhile announced that he would shortly submit a "UN bill" for approval, but which would only authorize payment gradually as reform "benchmarks" were carried out.

Annan told AFP that the dual approach was likely to result in a single package being approved by Congress, and hoped that the full arrears would be authorized despite suggestions from a leading Republican on Friday that only $825 million would be appropriated in stages.

But will Congress keep its word at a time of tight budget constraints? In 1995, congressional leaders made a similar personal pledge to French President Jacques Chirac, which they disavowed days later in a letter to Clinton.

Helms and Annan agreed to hold staff meetings in Washington and New York to discuss the proposed legislation, an unprecedented move for the United Nations whose ties are with governments and not legislatures.

"We have in mind getting them better informed on our reform process," Eckhard said. Annan's aides were struck by misconceptions about the United Nations circulating in the tiled corridors of Congress.

Annan has instructed his senior reform adviser Maurice Strong to come up with a reform package which the 185-nation General Assembly will be able to act on at its next session in September.

"The reform process is between the member states and the secretary-general," Annan stressed. Eckhard noted that Annan would now have to find out how far governments are prepared to go, and that the process "could break down anywhere along the way." The other problem facing Annan in his new relations with Congress is what one leading House representative, Robert Livingston, on Friday called a "chicken and egg" situation.

"Which comes first, the money, or the reforms," said Eckhard.

But he added that Helms, who had started out saying that the ball was in the UN court, had told Annan later that "the ball is in both of our courts." (AFP)

President Tackles Property Problem in Nicaragua

MANAGUA — Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Aleman launched an ambitious plan to resolve Nicaragua's private property problem by granting legal titles to 50 families who had received confiscated land.

Aleman's liberal alliance government, which took office on Jan. 10, plans to give property titles to 102,000 poor families who received confiscated land during the 1979-1990 left-wing Sandinista government, legalizing their ownership.

But he plans to make wealthy Sandinistas who received confiscated property return or pay for it, hopefully ending confusion over property ownership in Nicaragua.

On this historic day we begin the process of legalizing the plots of land of thousands of humble men and women. With this we are sewing the seeds of social peace in Nicaragua, Aleman told reporters in Managua's poor Primavera area.

In a flurry of legislation before leaving office after their 1990 election loss to former President Violeta Chamorro, the Sandinistas parceled out more than 200,000 properties they had confiscated.

Conflicts between the current occupants and the former owners became a major sticking point in the reconciliation between the Sandinistas and the right-wing liberals, and led to insecurity over land ownership.

Resolving the legal insecurity surrounding private property is one of the main demands of the Nicaraguan business community and foreign investors. (Reuter)

Vanuatu Looks Back on Its "Blackbirding" History

PORT VILA — Vanuatu is taking its first look back at a crucial period in its history which, although tainted by forced labor, played a key role in shaping the tiny Pacific state's culture.

Major elements of the archipelago's heritage were born last century when Australian traders first came here to recruit tens of thousands of workers to work in Queensland's nascent sugar cane industry, experts say.

"It was the first time so many people from here went overseas and saw something different", Vanuatu's National Museum Director, Ralph Regenvanu, said explaining the tremendous impact the recruitment of cheap labor had on this island chain's history.

"It's ... the episode in history where our national language, Bislama (a form of pidgin English), comes from. It was invented at this time. This is how people communicated with planters on their boats," he said.

The rounding up of laborers to travel to Australia also led to the spread of Christianity in the then new Hebrides, a feature of the islands' that still remains today.

"... the people who came back from there introduced Christianity to lots of areas of Vanuatu," Regenvanu said.

Despite the impact of the labor trade known as "blackbirding" on Vanuatu's history, the issue was rarely raised in the islands, which became independent from a former French-British condominium in 1980, until a special exhibition opened here last September.

A television special on the exhibition was aired in November, and rerun this month due to popular demand.

"South Pacific islanders," jointly organized by the National Museum here and the Sydney-based National Maritime Museum, revealed for the first time to many Vanuatans the history of their ancestors.

It shows that the arrival of the sugar farmers in 1863 marked the start of "blackbirding," which would take about 63,000 people from Vanuatu, then the new Hebrides, and from the nearby Solomon Islands to work in Australia.

The practice of recruiting cheap labor from the Pacific began after farmers in northeastern Queensland state moved to take advantage of a collapse in sugar production in the United States, which was being torn apart by its war of secession.

Intensive labor was needed to grow cane, but it was believed at the time that Australia's harsh climate would eat away at white people, causing premature death. As a result, farmers began recruiting cheaper and supposedly less fragile labor here.

But while many locals welcomed the chance to travel abroad and earn a salary on the plantations — six pounds ($10) for "blackbirds" compared to 40 pounds for white workers — some were not given a choice and were virtually enslaved by their employers, experts said.

Anthropologist Kirk Huffman explained in the television program how in the early 1860s the first traders captured locals at sea in their canoes.

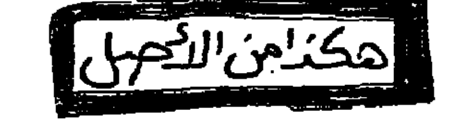
They either placed their ship so as to block the wind on the canoe's sails, forcing it to stop, or they dropped heavy pieces of metal into the canoes, causing them to sink.

In 1901, amidst growing controversy in Australia and Britain, the Commonwealth Parliament banned the use of islanders for labor, ending "blackbirding" after more than 40 years.

Most islanders worked in Australia for two years and were then sent back home — where they often signed up to go back to Queensland — while many wanted to stay in Australia after their work ended, but were forcibly deported. Some were simply dropped at sea, historians say.

Some, however, formed an association to defend their rights and were eventually allowed to stay in Australia, the exhibition explains.

Currently about 20,000 Australians are descendants of the "blackbirds." Regenvanu said many Australian South Pacific islanders were now returning to their roots in Vanuatu. "We get to see them coming back now, this is very recent." (AFP)



Pictorial Prayer Cards Published

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — On the occasion of the concurrency of the Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies with the blessed month of Ramazan, and in order to further publicize the Islamic culture, specially prayer, the Coordinating Council of Islamic Propagation has published a very beautiful collection of prayer training cards, a fax from the council affiliated to the Committee for Holding Commemoration Ceremonies of the Ten-Day Dawn said.

The pictorial 30-page pocket-size collection includes correct methods of ablution, dry ablution, obligations, first principles and discretions of prayer, Friday prayer, communal prayer, signs prayer, funeral prayer, and *Faraj* Supplication, with Farsi translations.

Those interested to obtain the cards and enjoy a special discount may refer in person, with introduction letters from the schools or cultural centers, to the central office of Coordinating Council of Islamic Propagation located at No. 160, Dr. Fatemi.

Cultural Society Holds Today Third Exhibition on Biographies

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — In order to make the interested familiar with the founders of the Islamic culture of Iran, the Cultural Works and Luminaries Society, along with its activities for the commemoration of the 18th Victory Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, holds today its third exhibition on biographies.

According to a fax from the public relations department of the society, the exhibition includes biographies and works from some prominent Islamic figures as men of letters, scholars, luminaries, as well as some precious works.

The exhibition also offers books, screens biopics, and holds programs like commemorating the cultural personalities, a night with poetry, as well as scientific gatherings.

Leading Spanish Historian Dies

BILBAO, Spain — Manuel Tunon de Lara, one of Spain's leading contemporary historians, died at his home at Leioa, near here, on Saturday aged 81, his family said.

Born in Madrid on December 2, 1915, Tunon de Lara joined the Communist Youth Movement in 1917. Persecuted by the regime of Francisco Franco, which held him in a concentration camp, he emigrated to France in 1946.

Successively professor of history and Spanish literature at Paris's Sorbonne University and PAU, southern France, he was allowed to return to Spain in 1973. *(AFP)*

Daily Food for Thought

On Adversity

Who has not known ill fortune,
never knew himself,
or his own virtue.

MALLET AND THOMSON, Alfred

Japanese Tourists, Shia Pilgrims Keep Tourism Alive in Iraq

BAGHDAD — Japanese archeology buffs, Shia Muslim pilgrims and foreign businessmen are keeping tourism alive in sanctions-hit Iraq, the ancient land of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

But tourists have to be fit enough to travel hundreds of kilometers (miles) in dilapidated buses, at times through dreary or run-down towns, to discover what was known in ancient times as Mesopotamia.

The agency travel Sekai in Tokyo has since October organized three groups, of around 20 people each time, to tour the sights of Iraq, via Iran, at an all-inclusive cost of 4,000 dollars.

From Tehran, the intrepid tourists fly to Kermanshah on the Iraqi border and then, after a two-hour delay, board a bus to Baghdad. The whole journey takes eight hours.

Iraq has been under an air traffic embargo, as part of UN sanctions, since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The main route to Baghdad is overland from Amman, but that takes at least 10 hours.

On the program in northern Iraq, says Japanese tour leader Kiyotaka Tamari, are the ruins of the Assyrian cities of Niniveh (modern-day Mosul), Nemrod, Ashur and Khorsabad.

In the south of the country are the ancient Sumerian city of Uruk, Ctesiphon built by the Persians, Samarra of the Abbasid dynasty, and, of course, Babylon.

Ayako Maryyama, speaking in broken English at the Rashid Hotel in Baghdad that serves as home base for the excursions, said her favorite stop was Nemrod, the military capital of the Assyrians.

Groups of French and Belgian tourists make the same circuit, said guide Bassem Hassan.

The Iraqi guide caters for businessmen who travel to oil-rich Iraq hoping to sow the seeds for future contracts in the post-sanctions era, and meets them at the border with Jordan.

His travel agency charges a French tour organizer 95 dollars per person a day, including the Amman-Baghdad return taxi fare. A trip to Babylon is thrown in for an extra 10 dollars.

Such business trips are becoming more and more common, but the dozens of tour organizers in Baghdad rely on "religious tourism" to make a living, said Ziad Taraq of Al-Zahra agency.

From a small office equipped with a fax and an old telex machine which "sometimes" hooks up with Amman, he organizes trips for pilgrims to the tombs of Shia martyrs in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, south of Baghdad.

The government authorized the return of religious tourists in 1993. They have been coming in their thousands from India, Pakistan and even Indonesia, again passing through mainly Shia Iran, said Taraq.

Iranians themselves are banned from traveling to Iraq, as the two countries which fought a 1980-1988 war have still not made a formal peace.

The needs of Shia pilgrims are more modest than the regular tourists and Al-Zahra offers 10-day package deals for 122 dollars, leaving a profit of just eight dollars, according to Tarak.

"To get nearer the martyrs Hussein and Ali, Shias prefer not to be too comfortable and some of them even sleep in the street," he said. *(AFP)*

Young Director's First Movie Scoops Major Prize

MADRID — The first movie by a 24-year-old director scooped the Goya Prize for best film at the awards ceremony for the Spanish equivalent of the Oscars here late Saturday.

"Tesis," a low-budget thriller by Alejandro Amenabar, was cited in seven categories, including best direction, best sound and best original screenplay, while one of its stars, Fele Martinez, was named as best new actor.

Pilar Miro's *"El Perro del Hortelano"* also won seven awards out of 12 nominations, including best adaptation and best actress with Enma Suarez. *(AFP)*

U.S. to Appeal Decision in Case of Stolen German Art

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department said Friday it would appeal a decision to cancel a trial in a case involving German art allegedly stolen by a U.S. soldier at the end of World War II.

Spokesman John Russell said the department would appeal the October decision of a federal judge that said the five-year statute of limitations had passed thus disallowing a trial against the heirs of the GI, Joe Tom Meador.

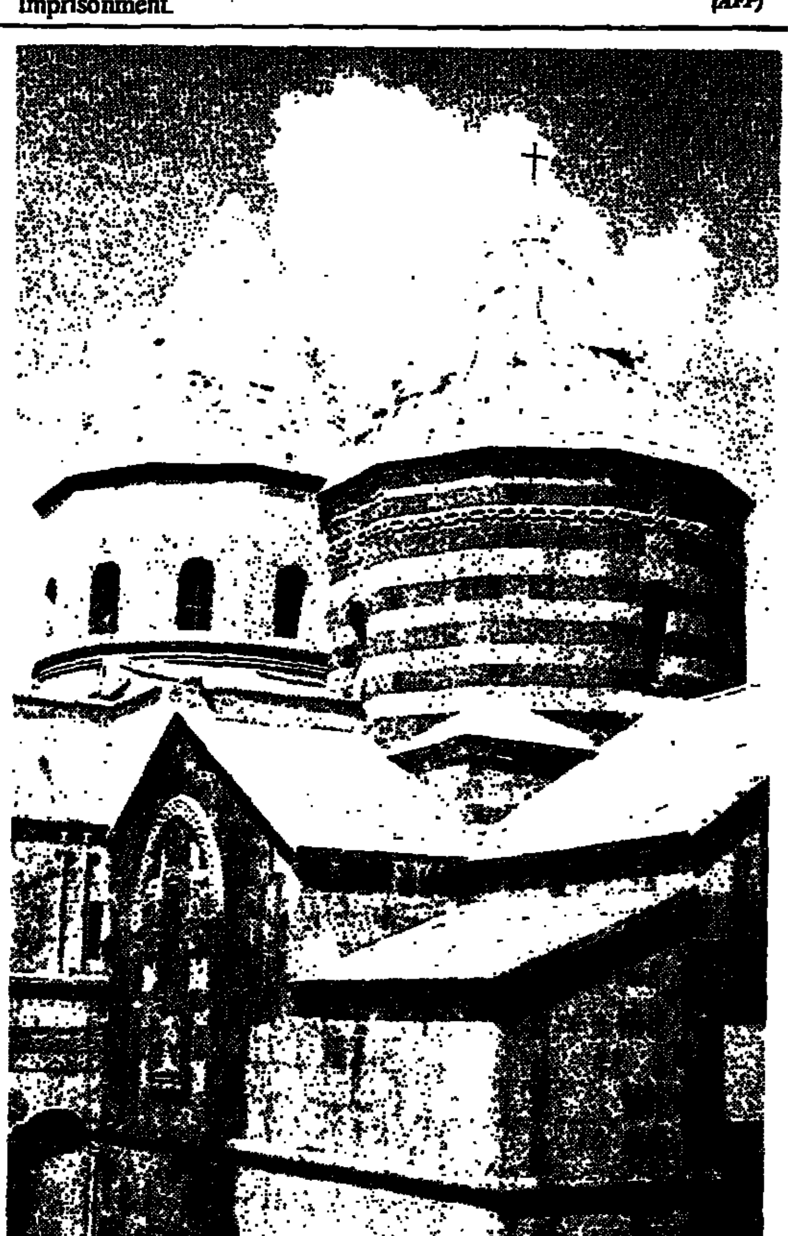
Jack Meador, 77, and Jane Meador Cook, 63, were scheduled to appear before a federal judge in Texas for attempting to sell two pieces of art that belonged to their brother, who died in 1980.

The two siblings face a possible fine of $250,000 and 10 years imprisonment.

Former Meador attorney John Torigian also faced charges for acting as the family's intermediary for the sale of the two pieces — a 9th-century Bible bound with diamond-incrusted gold and silver and a 16th-century prayer book.

In April 1945, Joe Tom Meador stole 12 pieces of art valued at 200 million dollars from an impressive collection that the Nazis shielded from allied bombings by placing it in a mine near Quedlinberg, in the central eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt.

Torigian in 1990 acted as intermediary between the family and the Germany government, returning 10 pieces from the collection for 2. 75 million dollars. *(AFP)*



TEHRAN — Freedom of conscience and religion has a deep historical root in Iran and is in fact intertwined with the Iranian culture. History of Iranian Christians bears testimony to this fact. There are some famous, ancient churches in Iran such as the Church of Holy Mary in Urumieh, Church of Vank in Isfahan and the Church of Holy Tadeus in Maku, all of which attended by Christians freely. Being the oldest church in Iran, the church of Holy Mary is also considered as one of the oldest churches in the world. It is said that this church is the second most famous church in the world after the Church of Bethlehem in the birthplace of Jesus in Palestine.

(Courtesy the Silk Road)

TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE

Part 5

Denigration of Non-Western Cultures

Immediately after the encounter commences, the graph of European reaction rises with esteem and wonder; and then, as political conquest and overlordship increase, the graph alters course and begins to record increasing denigration instead. A remarkable transformation of image thus takes place as the political relationship between Europe and non-European societies changes to the advantage of the former, rendering the Europeanization of the world picture almost an act of divine will.

By 1850, political dominance over the non-Western world was clearly installing distorted ideas not only about that part of the world but rebounding, to distort Western man's image of himself as well. Already by 1835, for instance, the British had acquired a flattering notion of their own civilization (Victorian England was seen to be at the top of the pyramid of civilization) and a thorough-going contempt for Asia.

This contempt finds expression in the famous Minute of Lord Babington Macaulay:

I have never found one amongst them (the orientalists) who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia ... It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgment used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

Dharampal has produced an interesting record of these assessments of science and technology in India among Western observers as the relationship between India and Britain changed to Britain's advantage.

Regarding the question of Indian astronomy, he discusses the case of Prof. John Playfair, professor of mathematics in the University of Edinburgh and an academician of distinction. Playfair studied the accumulated European information then available on Indian astronomy and arrived at the conclusion that the Indian astronomical observations pertaining to the period 3102 years BC appeared to be correct by every conceivable text. This accuracy could only have been achieved either through complex astronomical calculations by the Indians or by direct observation in the year 3102 BC.

Playfair chose the latter. Opting for the former would have meant admitting that "there had arisen Newton among Brahmins to discover that universal principle which connects, not only the most distant regions of space, but the most remote periods of duration, and a De La Grange, to trace, through the immensity of both its most subtle and complicated operations."

Similar attitudes prevailed concerning the knowledge of how Indians produced *Wootz*. Wrote J.M. Heath, founder of the Indian Iron and Steel Company and later prominently connected with the development of the steel industry in Sheffield:

... iron is converted into case steel by the natives of India, in two hours and a half, with an application of heat that in this country, would be considered quite inadequate to produce such an effect; while at Sheffield it requires at least four hours to melt blistered steel in wind-furnaces of the best construction, although the crucibles in which the steel is melted, are at a white heat when the metal is put into them, and in the Indian process, the crucibles are put into the furnace quite cold.

However, Heath would not admit that the Indian practice was based on knowledge "of the theory of operations," simply because "the theory of it can only by explained by the lights of modern chemistry."

But the beginning of this century, the Western mind had already convinced itself that Western science and philosophy were the only approach to metaphysical truth ever attained by the human species and that the Christian religion provided wisdom and insight incumbent on all people everywhere to believe.

The result is astonishingly reflected in the output of academia: a "history of art" turned out to be nothing but a history of European art and a "history of ethics," a history of Western ethics. While European music was music, everything else remained mere anthropology.

(To be contd)

